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MARCH/APRIL 2025

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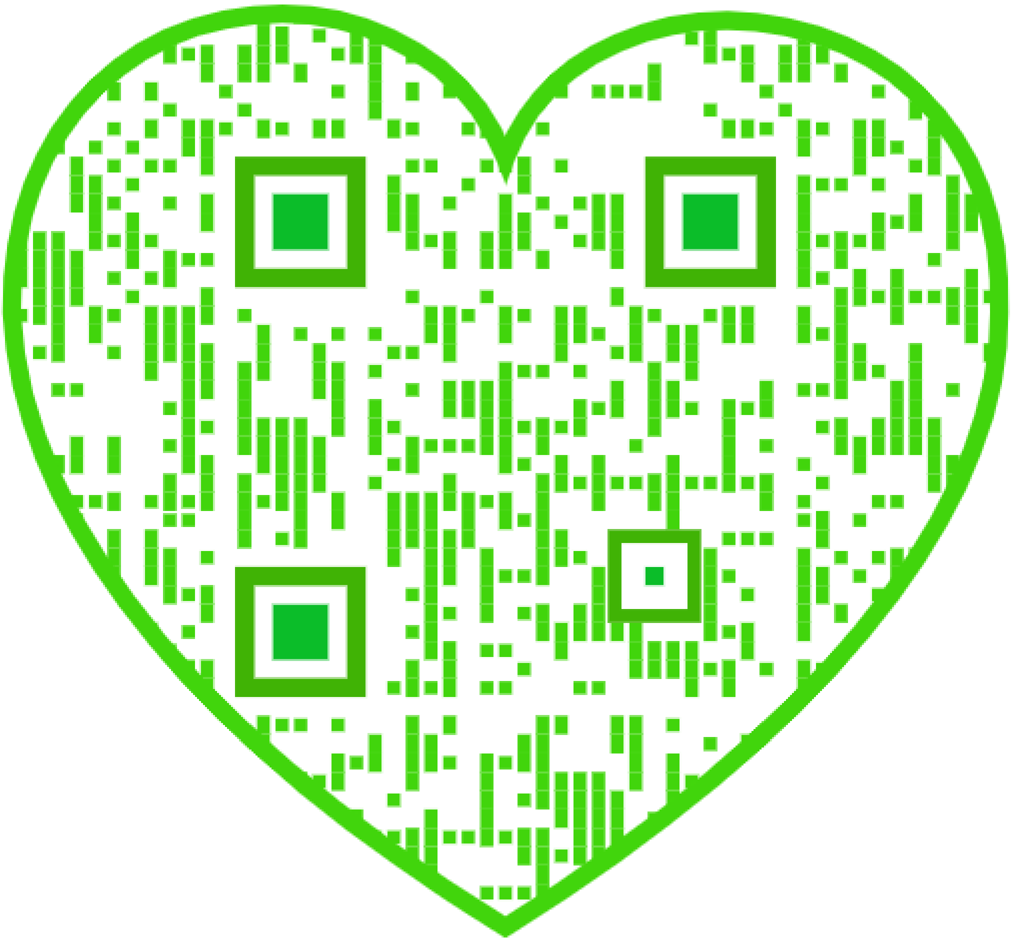

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Letter from the Editor

–

Tony Quiroga

Disarming. If there was one word to describe Jean, it'd have to be disarming.

C-SUITERS, ARISTOCRATS, and ego puffers didn't stand a chance when Jean walked in. Walls fell, posing stopped, and everyone's attention shifted to her. And she owned and satisfied every expectation. Every room was hers. Former *Car and Driver* editor and *Automobile* magazine editor-in-chief Jean Jennings died in December after a fight with Alzheimer's disease.

Fortunately, Jean lives on in the many, many people whose careers she sparked. *C/D* might not have digital director Laura Sky Brown, senior editor Ezra Dyer, associate managing editor Jennifer Misaros, deputy editor Joey Capparella, or deputy design director Nicole Lazarus without Jean. She gave me a chance too.

With only four major car magazines and the internet still in its Netscape Navigator phase, becoming a car writer used to be about as possible as playing for the Yankees. Landing a job required someone to die or retire—at least it felt that way as I was waiting in the *Automobile* lobby to interview as a motor gofer (its version of our road warrior). I wore a suit and tie. Jean found my overdressing amusing, possibly because she'd worn overalls to her first meeting with David E. Davis Jr. I made an impression, and my sartorial awkwardness inspired her to write a column about the great gofers of the past. Now I'm writing one about her.

Like a great diaspora, Jean's hires are spread throughout the car-writing world. Her *Automobile* was a talent incubator, its senior staff (including *C/D*'s Joe Lorio) a faculty that fostered genius. I learned magazine craft under the tutelage of Jean's number two, Mark Gillies, who in a career turn became one of the best PR people I've known. After he left, Jean elevated Joe DeMatio to the role. He led the *Automobile* academy by devoting his time and talent to enable the able.

The training worked, perhaps too well. When Jean's discoveries kept abandoning her, she jokingly described *Automobile* as the Monster.com of car writing. I gofered alongside Mike Austin, who is now *Road & Track*'s executive editor. Jean said yes to the creative perfectionist Jason Cammisa when he was just a guy with a cool Volkswagen Scirocco; now he's a must-watch on YouTube. That same year she signed Sam Smith. Sam's writing makes us all look like hacks—I hire him whenever he says yes. Former *C/D* staffers Eric Tingwall and Erik Johnson got their first offers from Jean and still work in the industry—Erik met Jean after selling her a pair of shoes. She saw intelligence and capability in David Zenlea and Rusty Blackwell; today they're thriving at Hagerty's magazine and Bring a Trailer.

More than just a finder of people, Jean also put women in control. During my tenure at *Automobile*, every department had a female lead. Amy Skogstrom—later executive editor at the Porsche magazine *Panorama*—ran production as managing editor. Art director Molly Jean governed design. And copy chief Wendy Warren Keebler ensured every word was where it should be. Outside the office, Jean's leadership and position inspired women to enter and prosper in a male-dominated industry.

In addition to her disciples, Jean is survived by her husband Tim, her three dogs, and her body of work, which remains as engrossing, funny, and disarming as it was when it was printed. Jean, know that while you disarmed us all, you armed three generations of writers. Thank you.

Jean's writing, voice, and adventures live on at caranddriver.com. Follow the link below for more.

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BACKFIRES

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Think of it as the peer-review section of the magazine, hosted by your pal Ed.

CAR AND DRIVER
Feel the Buzz

BUZZ KILLERS

So let me get this straight. You drove an Aston Martin Vantage, a Porsche 911 Turbo, Gordon Murray's GMA T.50, and the Ferrari 12Cilindri [November/December 2024]. What makes your cover? A $70,000 electric VW minivan. How the mighty have fallen.
—Tommy O
Saline, MI

Your "Catch a Buzz" review was totally awesome [November/December 2024]. The Volkswagen ID.Buzz has all that this 67-year-old post-hippie but current surfer could want. The Competitive Set graph proved it to me. Except the base price. Unfortunately, I ain't got Grandma's money!
—"Grateful" Ted Anthony
Austin, TX

The ID.Buzz is a $70,000 road-trip adventure van that can only go on a two-hour road trip before you have to start searching for a charging station.
—Robert Bendetti
Charleston, SC

Having owned two Buses and a Vanagon, I dreaded the day Volkswagen would do a New Bus. VW needs to take three feet out of the wheelbase, make it a cab-over, fit smaller tires and wheels, and ditch the front motor to reduce that deal-breaking 42.7-foot turning circle, as well as the price and the weight. As it sits, the ID.Buzz is a monstrosity.
—Karl
Los Angeles, CA

Jerry would turn his back on this one. At $70K, stockbrokers and investment bankers may bite. Almost everyone else will say "VW must be trippin'."
—Gregory Wolley
Portland, OR

I can't believe 10 perfectly good pages of the magazine were wasted on the ID.Buzz. Volkswagen spent decades of designing for this?! The colors are terrible for the car, especially the white seats. The shape is weird, a rectangle with a ramp in the front. And the head- and taillights do not match the car. I could go on, but I don't think you would put an essay in Backfires.
—Zarak Khan
San Diego, CA
I'd like to know which two of the 12 pages of the road test you found useful—Ed.

For the low, low price of $70,000, not only do we get retro styling, but we also get retro brake technology with the rear drum brakes. What a deal!
—Tom
Westlake, OH

Did David Beard actually verify the top speed in reverse (you listed it)? If so, I am sure that my fellow readers would be interested in any comments he might have as to the van's driving dynamics, as well as the seating position and visibility. I am especially curious as to the stability of a rear-steer vehicle, even with front-wheel drive.
—Scott Dickens
Leicester, NC
The "R" you refer to is for "rear," as in rear motor, not "reverse." Although no one would enjoy a 101-mph J-turn more than Beard—Ed.

This and most other electric vehicles don't work for my driving style. During Midwest winters, I am not interested in stopping for an hour after every hour and a half of 75-mph driving when I have four other passengers. Call me when Volkswagen installs a turbo 2.0-liter diesel in a plug-in hybrid, and I will absolutely buy one.
—John P. Kelly
Oak Brook, IL
Google "Dieselgate"—Ed.

Q TIPS

It's great when a car magazine uses a long, limo-size word like "somnambulant" to describe the latest Infiniti QX80 ["Big Shot," November/December 2024]. It reminds me of my dad calling his high-mileage pickup truck a sluggish old sleepwalker.
—Gus Heinze
Tiburon, CA

I'm reading the test of the QX80, and I noticed the price listed in the text showed $112,590 base and $114,815 as tested, but the bubble in the comparison graph looked like around $94K. Am I missing something?
—D.J. DeFrancesco
Millstone, NJ

LETTER OF THE ISSUE

On a Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Manthey Racing, $53,946 for an increase of 176 pounds of downforce at 124 mph ["Man-o'-War," November/December 2024]? Save your money and put me in the passenger's seat for $0. I can guarantee you an instant 210 pounds at *all* speeds and *no* installation charge. I'll bring my own helmet.
—Bob Mighell
Eugene, OR
Your generous offer to make yourself sick earns you some BFGoodrich swag—Ed.

KO3
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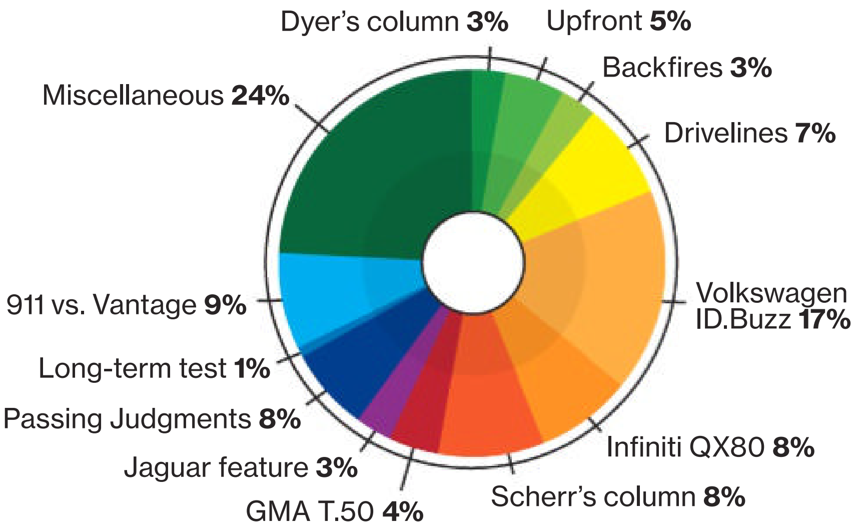
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL SIMARI

BEHIND THE WHEEL



COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN: The price of the ID.Buzz and an error in Passing Judgments had y'all upset enough to write in in very large numbers.

Yep. Those base and as-tested prices are for the Autograph trim level we tested. The figures in the Competitive Set chart, meanwhile, are determined by the base price of a model needed to attain the corresponding test results. In the case of the QX80, the least expensive all-wheel-drive version with 22-inch wheels is the $94,645 Luxe trim—Ed.

Gorgo on page 54 in "The Heart of a Monster"? Yes! She was way cooler than Godzilla and actually had a legitimate reason to rip London to shreds, whereas Godzilla was just mean-spirited. I'm so glad she found her way into your august publication.
—Richard Fogg
Longmont, CO

CAR and DRIVER
ID.Buzz

ILLUSTRATION BY BRETT AFFRUNTI

VANTAGE POINTS

The comparison of the 911 Turbo and the Vantage was well done ["Silicon & Steel," November/December 2024]. However, in the Final Results scoring, the Vantage received an 8 and the 911 received a 10 in chassis performance, but maximum points possible is 20? How does the 911, one of the finest sports cars, receive a 50 percent score? What car would score a 20?
—Jeff Smith
Neenah, WI
I'd like to say we're tough graders, but what you point out is a mistake. The scores should have been 17 for the Aston and 20 for the Porsche. The technical department has taken to self-flagellation to atone for the error—Ed.

Thoroughly enjoyed "Silicon & Steel." The artist in me would have chosen the Vantage, the perfectionist would go with the Turbo, and the logical me would have chosen the Corvette Z06. Oh wait, you didn't invite the Z06.
—Ed Morgan
Tokyo, Japan
We considered it, but the Z06's price doesn't line up with the 911 Turbo and the Vantage—Ed.

Where are the 911's cupholders?
—Fred Jackson
Gulf Breeze, FL

CAT FANCY

I'm just here for the letters about Jaguar ["Cat Nap," November/December 2024].
—F. Webb
McKinney, TX

As someone who routinely has paw prints on the hood of my Subaru, I enjoyed Dominic Bugatto's illustrations in "Cat Nap." A jaguar in the African plains, as in the illustration, would have had a long road trip from Central or South America.
—Jessica Rockeman
Richardton, ND

Jaguar is on hold, then is developing EVs exclusively? Aren't EV sales waning after the enthusiastic initial push? Sounds like the market throws you a right hook and you lean into it. This company is so far, in every sense, from the 1960s XKE.
—Kevin B. Parsons
Meridian, ID

Cat nap looking more like a dirt nap.
—Brian Wright
Jamaica Estates, NY

12 ANGRY CYLINDERS

"Scintillating," "abstemious," "indefatigable," "monastic" . . . ["Good Vibrations," November/December 2024]. Really? Ed., please remind Joe Lorio that this is *Car and Driver* and that my bathroom magazine rack doesn't have room for a dictionary.
—Ken Chapman
Advance, NC

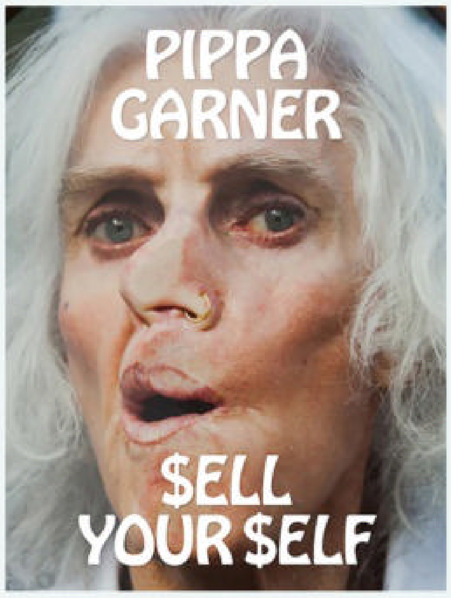
You must be trying indefatigably to be this abstemious. I'm glad you can spell beter [sic] than eye [sic] can.
—Yusuf Farooq
Mississauga, ON
Sic letter, bro—Ed.

Ferraris have always been fast and elegant. I never thought I'd see an ugly Ferrari. The 12Cilindri not only has a clunky name, but it also looks like a juiced Kia EV6.
—Robert Pavlik
Hudson, OH
I don't see it—Ed.

THREE-RING SPORTS CAR

Well, dog my cats! Regarding the Gordon Murray T.50 ["Return to Center," November/December 2024], if "the prettiest thing in the cabin is the open side of the console, where the shifter linkage is on display," then wouldn't it make sense to include a clear photo of that linkage? After all, it's not as though we can visit a Gordon Murray Automotive dealership to see it for ourselves.
—Tom Dans
Hamden, CT

BACKFIRES

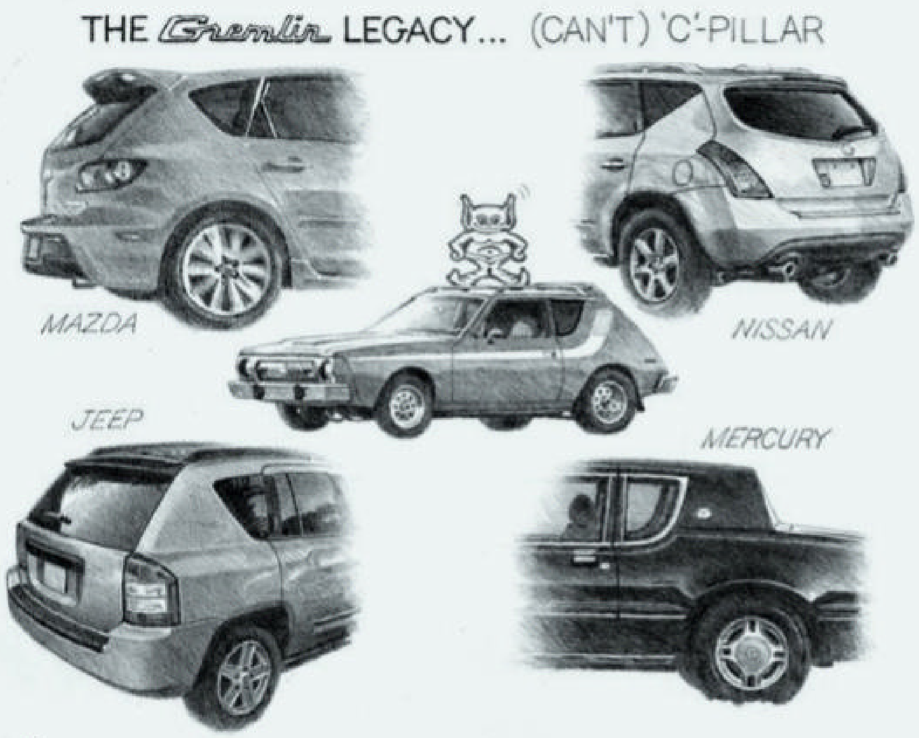


The book *Pippa Garner: $ell Your $elf* is a collection of the artist's work. Garner's illustrations (below) graced *Car and Driver*'s pages from 1996 until 2010. Go to caranddriver.com to see more of her work.

1942–2024

PIPPA GARNER

Artist, performer, and provocateur Pippa (born Philip) Garner died at age 82 on December 30, 2024. Garner's absurdist automotive illustrations appeared in *Car and Driver* for years. Many of these drawings skewered the car's role in American culture and the consumerism it fostered. But for Garner, who was the car-obsessed child of an ad exec and studied automotive design at ArtCenter College of Design in California before being expelled, the critique was grounded in affection. Some of her works—like a 1959 Chevrolet with a reversed body, or a 1968 Buick with a boat cockpit atop the rear—were drivable. Others weren't, such as the 1954 Chevy whose trunk she reappropriated into a love seat. Following a lifelong interest in challenging the folly of norms, Garner decided to "hack" her own gender, transitioning in the 1980s and becoming an early transgender activist. In her final years, Garner, a U.S. Army veteran, suffered health issues attributed to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. But at the same time, her art career rebounded, with shows at top galleries, the publication of monographs, lively merchandise sales, and inclusion in the prestigious Whitney Biennial in 2024. Garner's mordant wit, creativity, and unbridled lampooning of unbridled capitalism will be missed. It's surprising she was unable to hack her own death. —*Brett Berk*


THE Gremlin LEGACY... (CAN'T) 'C'-PILLAR
MAZDA
NISSAN
JEEP
MERCURY

I really enjoyed Elana Scherr's review, but one question wasn't answered: How the heck does the driver get into and out of the driver's seat? I wonder if anyone who can afford $3.2 million could do it without looking too dorky to deserve that car?
—Max Durando
Victoria, BC

I have never sent a letter to Ed., but I couldn't help myself after seeing the GMA T.50. Very nice-looking, clean design from the front and side view compared with most new sports cars and all their sharp edges. That was until I turned to page 73, and the first thing the rear brought to mind was a baboon's ass!
—Dave Smith
Moxee, WA

DINAN OUT

"The collar nuts feature an angular notch to clear the wider front wheel assemblies without the need to bulldog the offset" ["Back in Tune," November/December 2024]. No idea what that means, but yeah, baby! Gimme more of that hardcore car porn.
—Stephen Lederer
Providence, RI

The magnetorheological fluid bricks up in response to the magnetic charge, and shock waves penetrate our bodies as the tires pound the asphalt—Ed.

WINGDINGS

As an owner of a 2023 CT5-V Blackwing six-speed manual and an attendee of the Cadillac performance-driving academy, I am hopeful that a retrofit kit of the Precision package will be offered for existing track-focused owners ["Black Ops," November/December 2024]. While not all elements may be easily upgraded, I have the carbon brakes and the Eibach lowering progressive-spring kit. Camber is key, and bushing deflection should be an easy swap. Hopefully that's the same for the anti-roll bar. Reprogramming the dampers should be feasible too. Cadillac, please help us enjoy your improved tuning.
—Julian Mann
Mount Pleasant, SC

HOURGLASSES

I was happy to see the Kia Niro PHEV in your long-term test fleet ["The 40,000-Mile Test," November/December 2024]. We are a year and 16,000 miles into one ourselves. It's a perfect, if mechanically complex, solution for we who live in Maine and often travel 160 miles or more to places where we can't recharge. Here's my question: With 90 percent or more of our driving being on battery power, we have gone 4000 miles since we last bought gas and still have a quarter of a tank. Why does the car keep telling me we need an oil change? Do you have any insights?
—Joel Cutler
Cape Elizabeth, ME

The Niro's owner's manual calls for an oil and filter change at 8000 miles or every 12 months regardless of the mileage—Ed.

STOP THAT

I noticed the braking stats for the BMW Z4 M40i ["Passing Judgments," November/December 2024]. If I'm doing the old 70 to 0 in 53 feet, am I effectively self-eviscerating?
—Jay Fox
Centennial, CO

No, but you may get nauseated. Put the number 1 in front of the 53, and you'll have the correct stopping distance—Ed.

Sic your dogs on us at: editors@caranddriver.com

As a longtime subscriber, I know you are all about saving the manuals. "Passing Judgments" has many expensive manual-transmission cars that most people cannot afford. How about a review of the Nissan Versa five-speed manual? It's the last new manual-transmission vehicle available for sale for under $20,000. It's a new car most people can probably afford but have not heard about.
—Tim Finnegan
Kensington, MD
We've repeatedly begged Nissan for a manual Versa test car, as the worst part about the automatic Versa is its continuously variable transmission. The manual would seemingly solve that, of course, but we can't get a test car—Ed.

SAY MY NAME

I applaud the use of symbolism in Elana Scherr's column about recycling car names [November/December 2024]. But the Crunchwrap would never be a Toyota. It would be a model of Mustang known for its hasty and disastrous exits from Cars & Coffee after losing control under acceleration, impacting the curb ("crunch"), and the driver overcorrecting into a tree or other stationary object ("wrap").
—Rick Sanford III
Prince George County, VA

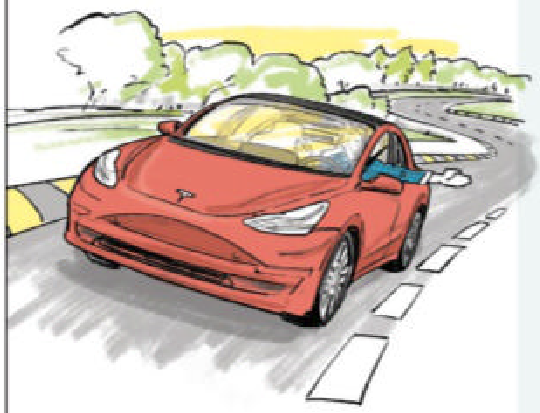
I enjoyed Scherr's column on recycling automotive names. One story not mentioned (which I gleaned from your magazine decades ago) was that a proposed name for the Pontiac Firebird was Banshee until the GM sleuths divined that Banshee could mean "bird of death." So long to that. Hello, Firebird. This is why I keep my past issues.
—Tim Dunford
Victoria, BC

The car-naming story made me laugh. I happened to name my beautiful Siamese cat after a fictional TV character, Maurice, the warlock father of Samantha Stephens (Elizabeth Montgomery) on the show *Bewitched*. Perhaps that would be a good name for a car. You can buy a Ford Mustang or Maverick; I'd personally like to buy a Ford Maurice. Maybe it has magical powers and could get me through gridlocked freeways in no time! Incidentally, there is an episode of *Bewitched* titled "Super Car." It is Season 3, Episode 19. It's hilarious!
—Stephen Adams
Davis, CA
Ramble on, my friend. Ramble on—Ed.

BARF BAG

I'm scratching my head because Andrew Krok's article on the Tesla Model 3 Performance struck me as odd ["Tick, Tick, Boom," November/December 2024]. Or maybe it's the perfect oxymoron? He actually said one of the highs about the car is that it's "nauseatingly quick." What?! You always pride yourselves on statistics, particularly acceleration. Never in the history of your magazine would I have expected to see those words.
—Peter Mueller
Maui, HI
Stop by the office. We'll do a few acceleration runs in a Model 3 Performance, and you'll be yawning in Technicolor in no time—Ed.

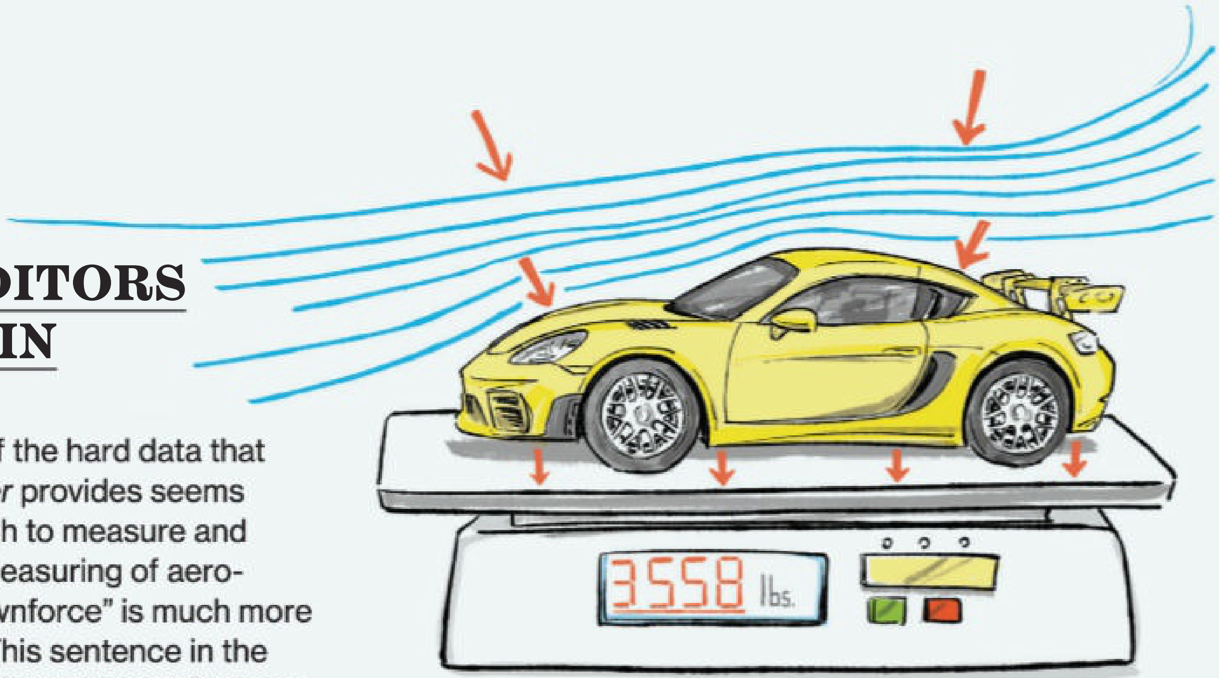
I can see from the photos of the Model 3 Performance model you tested that it replaces the turn-signal stalk with touch buttons on the steering wheel! That's a terrible idea, badly implemented. I was surprised you didn't call out the turn signals specifically. Do you not signal your turns and lane changes? The ergonomic issues you do mention pale in comparison.
—Mark Rustad
Redwood City, CA
It's as annoying in a Tesla as it is in a Ferrari, but you do get used to it—Ed.



DIAL 944 FOR MYSTERY

In your "What to Buy" article, you show two photos of a white Porsche 944 [November/December 2024]. You annotate it as a 1989 Turbo

THE EDITORS EXPLAIN



While most of the hard data that *Car and Driver* provides seems simple enough to measure and record, the measuring of aerodynamic "downforce" is much more mysterious. This sentence in the review of the Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS Manthey Racing stands out: "The additional carbon-fiber pieces . . . contribute 372 pounds of downforce at 124 mph (an increase of 196 pounds)" ["Man-o'-War"]. Ignoring the seemingly random choice of 124 mph, how do you know that? Is it purely a manufacturer's claim? Do you have a specialized strip of racetrack that is in reality a very sensitive scale and knows that on this run, the car was 196 pounds heavier than the last?
—Derrick W.
Colorado Springs, CO
We do not have a straightaway with the ability to measure downforce on the fly, and we accidentally misquoted Manthey's claim. The claimed total downforce for a Cayman GT4 RS equipped with the Manthey kit is 372 pounds at 124 mph, an increase of 176 pounds; the stock GT4 RS produces 196 pounds at that speed. This type of measurement is typically done in a wind tunnel, where the vehicle isn't moving, which makes measuring changes in vertical force much easier. And when you consider the units used in the development of both the Cayman and the Manthey kit, the 124-mph figure is far from random, as it equates to 200 kilometers per hour. –*Dave VanderWerp*

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRETT AFFRUNTI

BACKFIRES

model. However, the rear photo shows a 1991 spoiler. That style spoiler was utilized only on 1991 944s and on 968 models that followed.
—Peter McDonnell
St. Louis, MO

According to the experts at the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart, the 944 Turbo that we photographed is indeed a 1989 model. Those same experts told us that the raised spoiler you noticed, as opposed to the duckbill-like one on earlier 944s, became optional in 1990 and was likely available late in 1989. The museum's 944 Turbo is thought to have been built late enough in 1989 that it received the optional spoiler. Mystery solved—Ed.

PARTING THOUGHTS
You previously mentioned that validating a purchase is the main reason we subscribe ["Backfires," November/December 2024]. And it hit me! Acetylcholine receptors got busy remembering every family member or friend annoyed by my recommendation when it did not align with their buying intentions. Most people don't just like to make their own decisions, they also expect to be reassured. I had failed to recognize that. Buying takes token in two different currencies: passion and logic. All cars take us from point to point. But now you gave me a philosophical lecture with just one sentence. I will never again fall for the same ambush. People deserve the truth, but that is not always the responsibility of a friend. They look for my validation. From now on I will leave you alone with your burden. Thank you for doing the hard work!
—Bismark Madera
San Juan, PR

De nada—Ed.

Note to self: Stop reading Backfires while eating. You end up choking on your food from laughing too hard.
—Dave Rizzo
Phoenix, AZ

Sometimes it makes me throw up, but I usually swallow it again—Ed.

It's finally time GM is coming out with a ZR1 performance version of the Corvette, as I still miss the C7 ZR1 that I saw a couple of weeks ago at a local car show. But one door leads to another, I guess.
—Joseph Waltman
Indianapolis, IN

As Axl Rose once sang, just a little patience—Ed.

What is that crawling over page 45 [November/December 2024]? An inchworm chart? Lord, no! Please bring back the spider charts! No more complaints, I promise.
—Hal Feinberg
Camarillo, CA

I recently wrote some suggestions for the much-maligned spider graph. I didn't mean to kill it. I apologize.
—Joe Mattoni
Snoqualmie, WA

May/June issue, I expected more. You delivered less. July/August issue, I expected less. You delivered more. November/December, I expected more or less. You delivered more or less.
—George Kooluris
Bronxville, NY

I live in Santa Barbara. I found a driver's license for a John Pearley Huffman out on the street. I believe he's an editor here. I haven't been able to contact him through other methods.
—Spencer Bolton
Santa Barbara, CA

Pearley says thanks—Ed. ▪

CAR AND DRIVER

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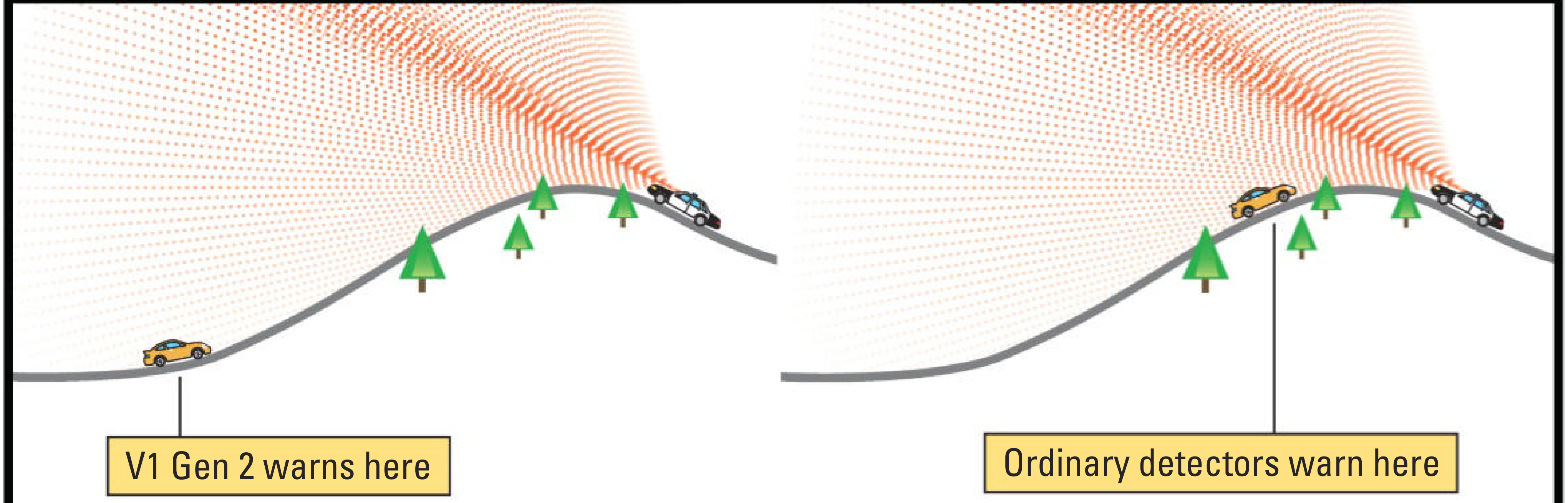

Radar works by bouncing a microwave beam off your car, then reading the reflection.

Radar detectors work by sensing the beam before the radar gets a clean read.

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UPFRONT

_CURRENT EVENT _TROPHY PIECE _DAMPER PROOF

Dollars to Donuts

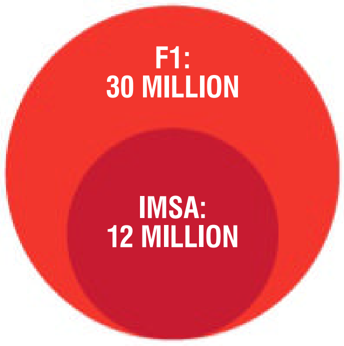
Despite the high cost, automakers are still drawn to racing.

_by Greg Fink _illustration by Gary Musgrave

THE ADAGE "Win on Sunday, sell on Monday" justified automakers' NASCAR efforts in the 1950s. But is boosting car sales still the reason manufacturers invest in motor racing? With sky-high budgets to compete in Formula 1, any additional sales attributable to a Sunday win likely aren't enough to cover the massive costs. Automakers unable to stomach the hundreds of millions of dollars in annual spending it takes to field a competitive F1 team have plenty of other racing series to compete in, but even sales linked to success in one of these still may not net enough of a profit to cover the expense of competition. However, factor in potential vehicle sales from

Genesis Magma Racing's racer features a gas-electric V-8 powertrain and will compete in the World Endurance Championship (WEC) and IMSA series.

SIZE MATTERS IMSA endurance racing doesn't garner the same level of interest as Formula 1, but it still attracts a sizable audience. Last year more than 12 million viewers in the United States tuned in to IMSA races on NBC channels. By contrast, F1, with twice as many race weekends in 2024, drew just shy of 30 million viewers across ESPN platforms.



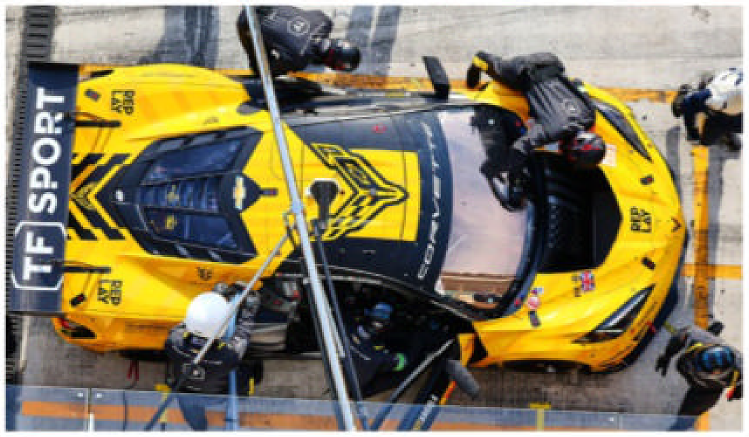
2024 VIEWERSHIP IN THE U.S.

brand exposure in racing with the earnings from sponsorship deals, potential prize money, and—in some series—revenue-sharing models, and motorsports involvement can help an automaker stay in the black.

"The potential benefits can outweigh the costs," says James Picariello, senior automotive analyst at BNP Paribas, about F1 racing. Most F1 teams operate out of the U.K., a country that legally requires companies to disclose certain financial and accounting information to the public. Thanks to this, we know the true costs of fielding a modern F1 team. For instance, Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 spent north of $530 million during the 2023 season but ultimately ended the year with more than $104 million in profits. Not all F1 teams are profitable, though. The Aston Martin–affiliated AMR GP, for instance, shelled out more than $300 million in 2023, only to end the season almost $37 million in the red after taxes.

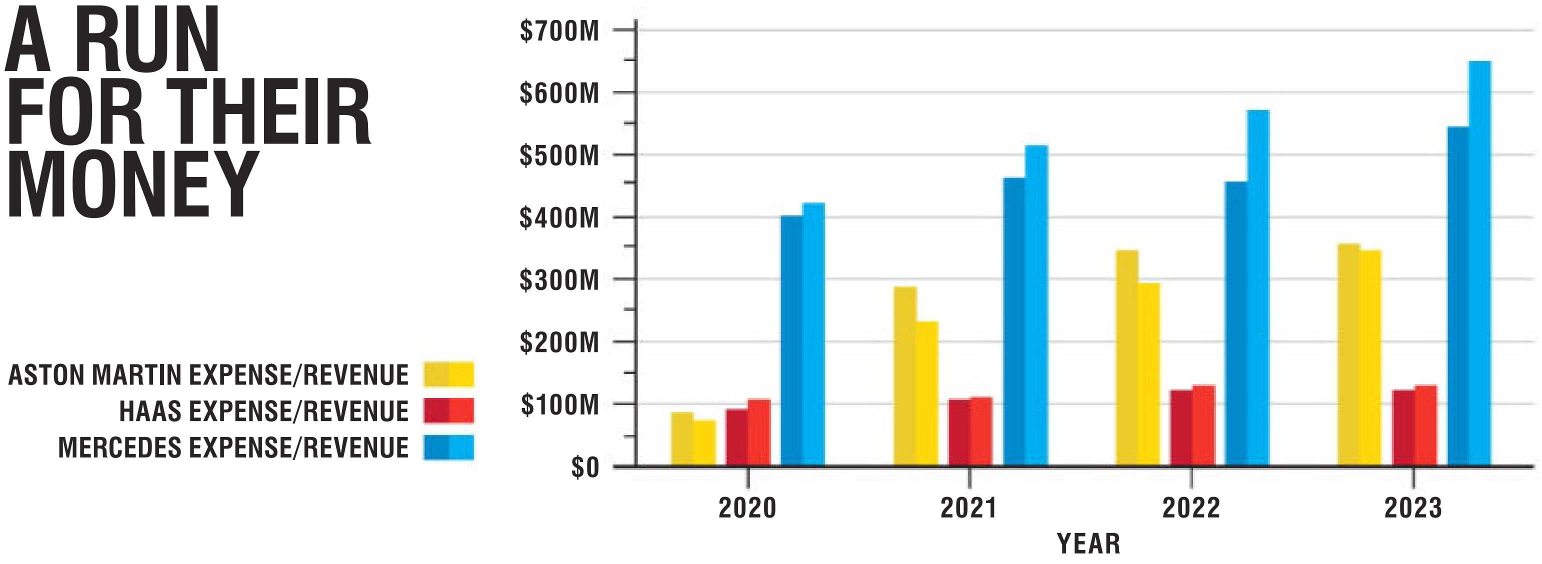
Compared with F1, the tens of millions of dollars it costs to field a two-car team in the FIA World Endurance Championship's (WEC) Hypercar class and the International Motor Sports Association's (IMSA) GTP class is a relative pittance. Though the potential profits from top-level endurance racing are a fraction of those from a large global series like F1, so are the possible losses. For automakers, some of which have multibillion-dollar marketing budgets, operating an endurance-racing team at a potential small loss can be a risk worth taking to increase brand exposure and awareness.

Evidently, Genesis thinks so. In December, Genesis Magma Racing revealed the GMR-001 LMDh-spec endurance racer that will compete in both WEC's and IMSA's flagship classes starting in the 2026 and '27 seasons, respectively. Along with promoting the upcoming Magma line of performance vehicles, the effort aims to increase overall awareness of the barely 10-year-old luxury brand. "Motorsport is known for raising brand awareness," says Genesis chief brand officer Luc Donckerwolke. "But that's not the only factor. The main factor for me is to learn from motorsports and get experience and know-how for our high-performance products."



TRACKING NEW TECH: Government regulations and consumer demand limit just how much of a race car's mechanicals make their way to an automaker's road cars, but competition continues to drive innovations that go beyond the track. Manufacturers may approach racing as a place to test proofs of concept or the general reliability of new technologies or ideas, be it in the form of a powertrain setup, thermal management, or a tire compound.

A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY



AT ALL COSTS: Since 2023, F1 has enforced a $135 million cap covering almost every aspect of the development and manufacturing of a team's car, the salaries of most team personnel, and garage equipment costs. The sport holds engines to a separate $95 million max. Starting in 2026, those caps will rise to $215 million and $130 million. There are no limits on driver salaries or marketing budgets. Thanks to generous sponsorship deals, ample prize money, and revenue sharing, F1 teams can operate in the black.

Cadillac reentered endurance racing 25 years ago. Come 2026, a GM/Cadillac effort will contest Formula 1.

"We sold approximately 700 to 800 General Motors vehicles through our IMSA racing platform in 2024," says Meagan Quinn, a marketing manager for GM who works on Cadillac Racing. The company can track just how many sales are directly attributable to leads generated at on-site vehicle displays at races. "If somebody tells us they're in the market right now, a dealer reaches out to them immediately," Quinn adds.

Though IMSA does not share attendance figures, association president John Doonan claims 11 of 12 events in the 2024 season had record attendance. Meanwhile, NBC Sports said last year that viewership of its IMSA broadcasts grew 37 percent in five years, with the network claiming more than 12 million viewers last season.

To Doonan, who before joining IMSA served as the director of motorsports for Mazda in North America, the continued enthusiasm for motorsports—including the growing interest in endurance racing—from automakers and fans alike is little surprise.

"For me, in my heart of hearts," Doonan says, "the most authentic way to market and advertise an automobile brand is through motorsport."

CADILLAC
WHELEN
Mobil 1
31

IMSA's Sebring and Daytona races give Floridians the chance to see someone below retirement age driving a Cadillac.

F1 TROPHY PHOTOGRAPH BY GETTY IMAGES

Battle of the Brands

Road-car brands you may recognize competing in major racing series.

Formula 1: Alpine, Aston Martin, Ferrari, Honda, McLaren, Mercedes

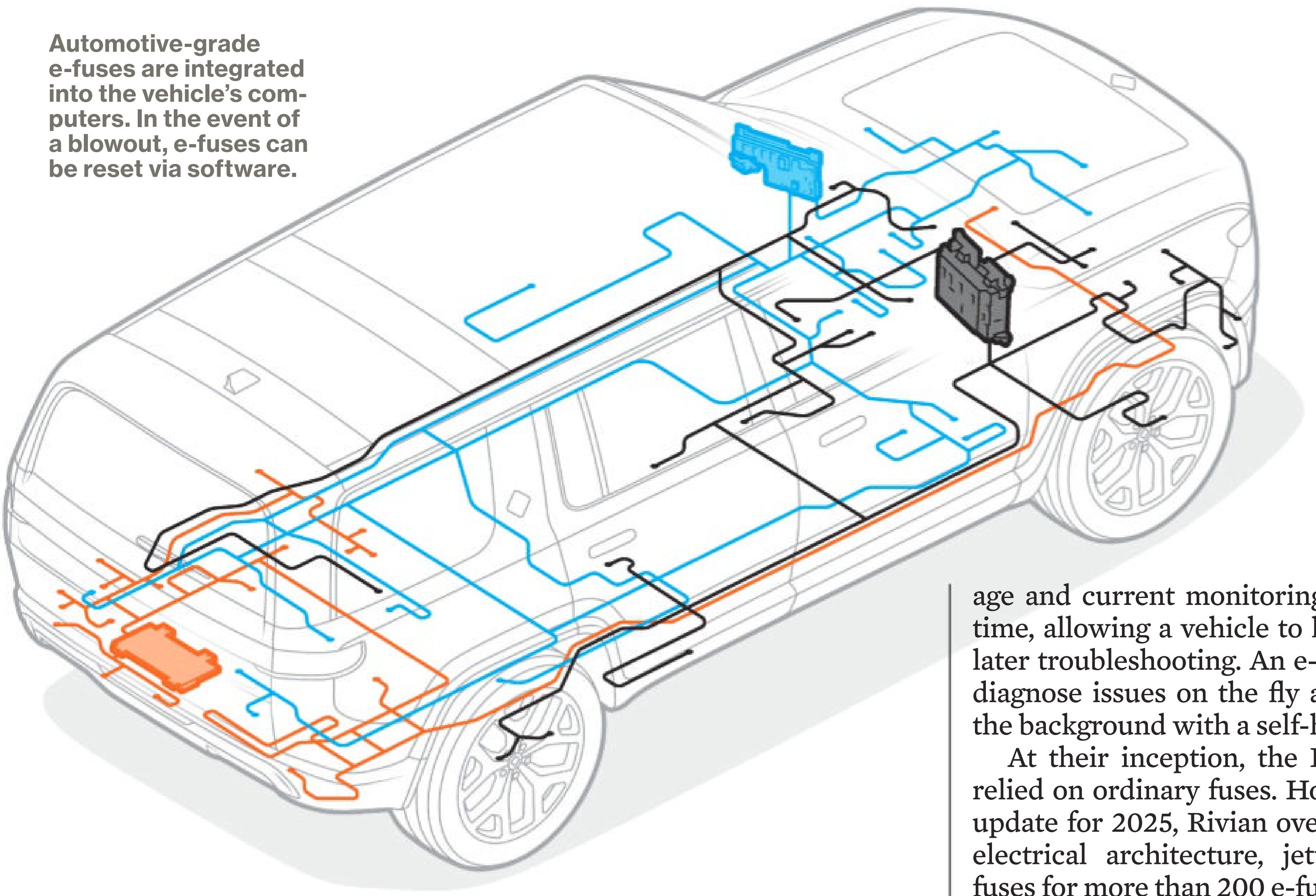
IMSA SportsCar Championship: Acura, Aston Martin, BMW, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Ferrari, Ford, Lamborghini, Lexus, McLaren, Mercedes, Porsche

IndyCar: Chevrolet, Honda

NASCAR: Chevrolet, Ford, Toyota

World Endurance Championship: Alpine, Aston Martin, BMW, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Ferrari, Ford, Lexus, McLaren, Mercedes, Peugeot, Porsche, Toyota

World Rally Championship: Citroën, Ford, Hyundai, Škoda, Toyota



Automotive-grade e-fuses are integrated into the vehicle's computers. In the event of a blowout, e-fuses can be reset via software.

E-fuses can precisely manage electricity flow and quickly react to overcurrent events. These traits are crucial to zonal architectures, which require careful control of current.

A Current Affair

Already used in computers and other electronics, the e-fuse is finding a home in automotive applications, kicking the classic blade-style fuse to the curb.

_by David Gluckman

LIKE ODOR-EATERS in workout shoes, a fuse doesn't call attention to itself until it stops working. These circuit breakers have two states: letting power flow or abruptly interrupting that flow due to a spike in current. To fix your car in the event of the latter, you must first find the fuse itself and then attempt to remove the thing with the often uncooperative small tweezers an automaker provides for such extractions. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Enter the e-fuse. All fuses deal in electricity, but here, the "e" prefix refers to the device's connected nature. E-fuses, which are placed into a computer chip, function like a mash-up of a fuse and a relay (basically an electrically powered switch) but with way more brains.

Because e-fuses react more quickly to overcurrent events, the wiring on the output side isn't subject to large current spikes and thus can be less robust, saving weight, space, and money. Since the computers are always watching, voltage and current monitoring takes place in real time, allowing a vehicle to log any incidents for later troubleshooting. An e-fuse's controller can diagnose issues on the fly and remedy them in the background with a self-healing reset.

At their inception, the Rivian R1T and R1S relied on ordinary fuses. However, as part of an update for 2025, Rivian overhauled the models' electrical architecture, jettisoning blade-style fuses for more than 200 e-fuses that now control various vehicle subsystems. (A few old-school fuses remain because of packaging necessities.) Rivian isn't the only automaker embracing e-fuses; Tesla, for instance, also uses them.

E-fuses have allowed Rivian to reduce the number of task-specific electronic control units by switching from a domain to a zonal architecture. Instead of grouping functions together by related purpose (window regulators, for example) and wiring them to a central controller, zonal architecture decentralizes things by placing the multifunction controllers into specific vehicle "zones."

Onsemi, a manufacturer of this tech, offers a four-channel e-fuse that can monitor up to a quartet of power streams at once or combine inputs and outputs to offer more current protection. Onsemi's e-fuse can also oversee 12-, 24-, 36-, and 48-volt sources, a valuable versatility when not all subsystems use the same voltage.

As expected of something with an integrated circuit, an e-fuse carries a higher up-front cost than its metal-blade counterpart. But in addition to better diagnostic coverage, e-fuses provide more precise power control, helping prevent the phantom drain from systems functioning in a low-power "sleep" mode. E-fuses also allow for changes—either during development or down the line as part of an over-the-air update—to be a true zero-touch proposition.

And best of all, they never need to be replaced. Good riddance to bad tweezers.

As the fuse has evolved from its primitive analog forms to what's effectively part of a computer chip, it has become smaller, smarter, and more capable.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS PHILPOT

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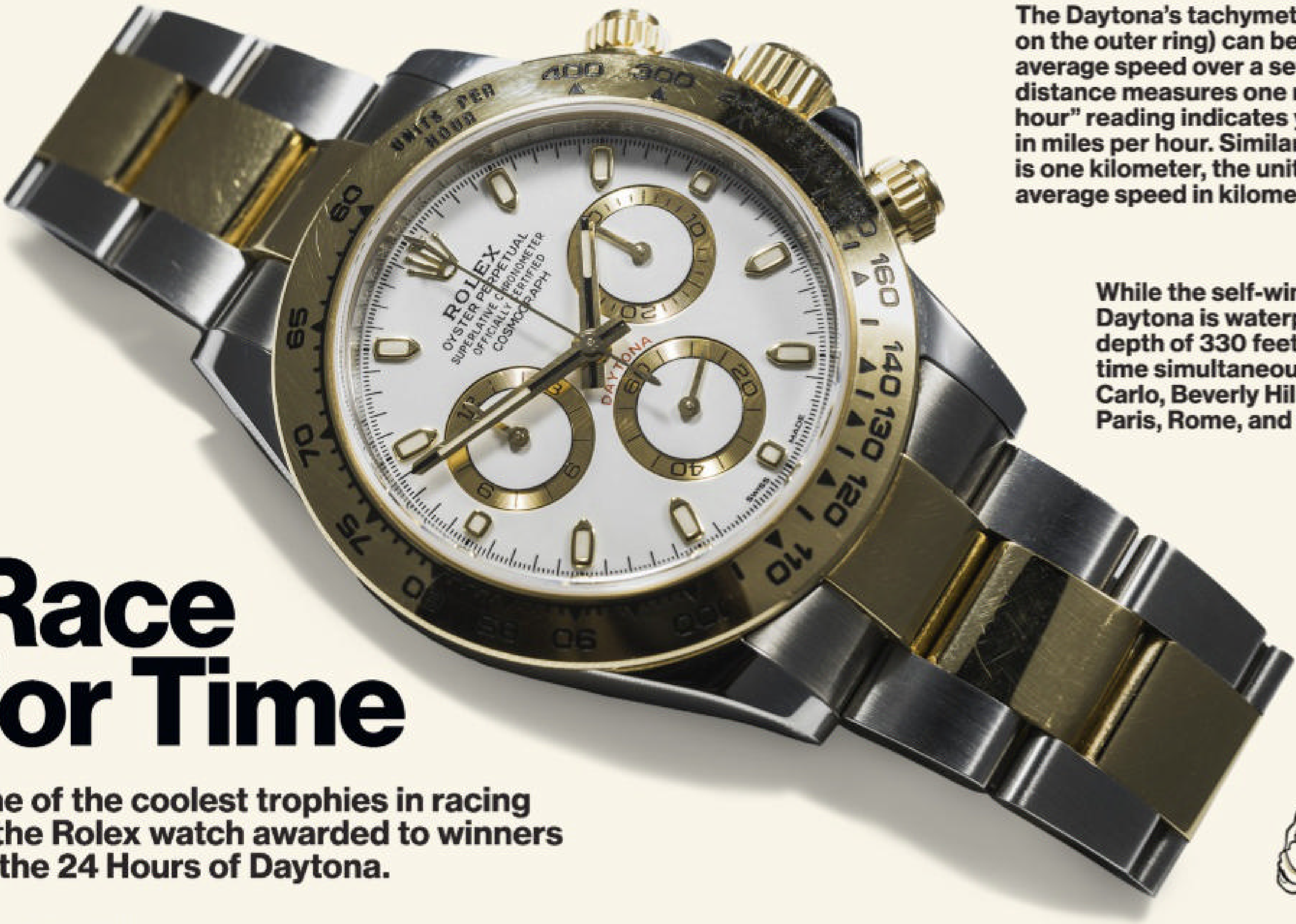

The Daytona's tachymeter (the graduations on the outer ring) can be used to calculate average speed over a set distance. If the distance measures one mile, the "units per hour" reading indicates your average speed in miles per hour. Similarly, if the distance is one kilometer, the units represent the average speed in kilometers per hour.

While the self-winding Daytona is waterproof to a depth of 330 feet, it can't tell time simultaneously in Monte Carlo, Beverly Hills, London, Paris, Rome, and Gstaad.

Race for Time

One of the coolest trophies in racing is the Rolex watch awarded to winners of the 24 Hours of Daytona.

_by K.C. Colwell

ACCORDING TO BANDIT HEELER (arguably the second-most famous blue heeler to come from Down Under), "Ice cream tastes the best when you've earned it." This sentiment applies to more than just sweets, though. Each year Rolex awards the winners of the 24 Hours of Daytona an Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona, a timepiece better known by the simpler epithet Daytona. More than just a testament to the feat of winning a 24-hour endurance race, this watch is also among the coolest trophies in all of motorsports.

Many of the legends taking to the track at this annual endurance race have the means to afford a $21,400 Daytona—and they may already own one. But the only way to nab a Daytona with "Winner" engraved on its caseback is to take the checkered flag in the 24-hour competition that takes place each January. Formula 1 champion Jenson Button, a Rolex ambassador, freely admits that he and his colleagues chase a victory at Daytona just to get this unique trophy.

Jordan Taylor won his first Rolex 24 trophy, and his most meaningful, in 2017 co-driving his dad's car with his brother (Ricky), Max Angelelli, and some guy named Jeff Gordon.

Who has the most overall wins at Daytona? Scott Pruett and Hurley Haywood share this honor with five each. While Pruett received a watch with every victory, Haywood didn't until his last, in 1991. In 1992, Rolex began awarding watches for overall and class wins at the race.

WATCH OUT

You don't have to triumph at Daytona to win a Rolex. You could instead take the checkered flag at the equally daunting 24 Hours of Le Mans race, where the overall winning drivers also receive a Rolex Daytona watch but in all steel, not the two-tone design seen here.

In 2024, the Goodwood Revival gave its Driver of the Meeting a Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust 41. That $10,550 Rolex is lovely but not as coveted as what endurance-race winners receive.

If racing isn't your thing, you could always set your sights on Best of Show at the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, an accomplishment that rewarded the owner of last year's winning car—a 1934 Bugatti Type 59—a Rolex Perpetual 1908, a timepiece that retails for $24,500. "Winning a Rolex is easy," said no one ever.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL SIMARI, ILLUSTRATION BY BRETT AFFRUNTI

The Achilles Kneel

Mercedes-Benz W123 wagons doing the Carolina Squat can get their droopy self-leveling rear suspension back up to snuff courtesy of a Californian.

_by Brett Berk

Service
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Andrew's

Mercedes never sold a W123 pickup, so Villaseñor made one himself. The shop truck started life as a sedan and thus (ironically) lacks the finicky self-leveling rear dampers of the W123 wagon.

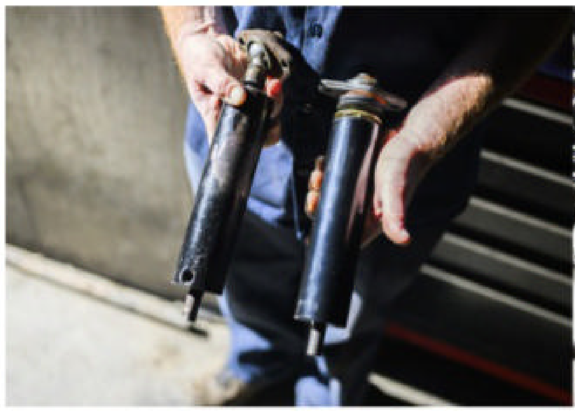
MERCEDES-BENZ'S W123 GENERATION of mid-size models are a bit like Clark Kent before he dons the red cape: a tad dweeby but seemingly indestructible. But like the Man of Steel, the W123 has one weakness, and it's not a green mineral from Krypton but the unctuous and sophisticated self-leveling dampers fit to the rear of 1979–85 300TD wagons. The hydraulically operated setup eventually fails, leaving the W123 longroof's rear sagging worse than the poorly tailored khakis of the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter from Smallville. Sadly, the necessary replacement parts are no longer in production, so reraising and retaining the wagon's hind dampers is a seemingly hopeless endeavor.

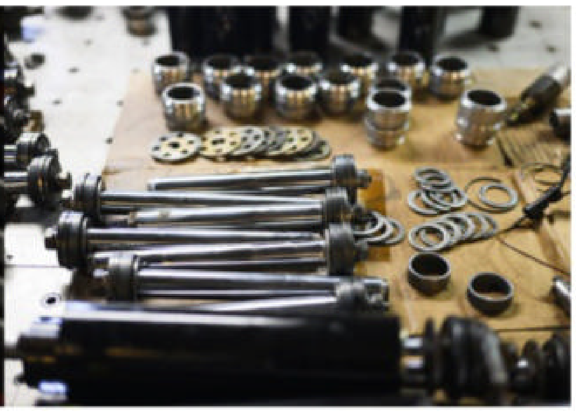
Fortunately for obsessive wagonistas, 38-year-old vintage-Benz fanatic Andrew Villaseñor has created a cottage industry in central California, where he rebuilds about 20 seeping dampers per month. Why bother pursuing such a repair when there's the option of replacing the complex system with the run-of-the-mill rear end of other W123 variants? Because doing so would run counter to Mercedes's 20th-century ethos of maniacal overengineering.

The self-leveling suspension "compensates for load and brings the ride height of the car to a safe level so you can drive at autobahn speeds," Villaseñor says. As if achieving triple-digit speeds in a 40-something-year-old turbo-diesel wagon is somehow requisite.

Perfecting the high-pressure rebuild required iteration. "We kept breaking tools," Villaseñor says. He also suffered initial quality issues when he commissioned an Indian company to supply remanufactured sets of the setup's archaic two-piece seals. Eventually, he switched to an American supplier capable of producing a bespoke and modern rubber one-piece seal.

Villaseñor is the rare W123-wagon self-leveling-suspension rebuilder (if not the only one) to offer his parts on an exchange program. When a customer orders a pair of remanufactured dampers for $1100, Villaseñor includes a prepaid return label. If the buyer sends back old, oozing parts, Villaseñor issues up to a $500 refund. He can then rebuild those worn components for future sale. "That keeps the whole cycle going," he says.

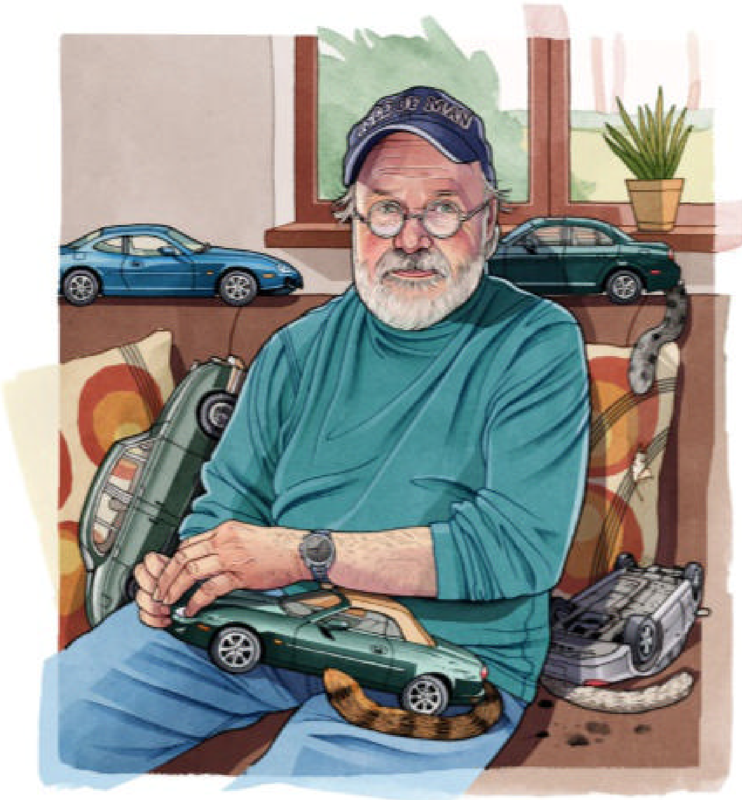




PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES LIPMAN

EZRA DYER

The arrival of an F-type means it's finally time to meet the neighbor who harbors five Jaguars in his driveway.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADAM CRUFT

I HAVE NEIGHBORS I HAVEN'T MET, but I know their vehicles. There's the guy with a Saab 900 Turbo convertible, a Volkswagen Karmann Ghia, and a square-body Chevy pickup making unlikely bedfellows under a carport. There's the one with a Mercedes G-wagen RV, a Volvo C30, and an adventure bike. And there's another neighbor whose driveway looks like its own Jaguar-themed Cars & Coffee, with a 1997 XK8 coupe, a 1998 XK8 convertible, a 2005 S-type R, a 2004 XJR, and an early-'60s Mark 2.

One day I decide to stop by and introduce myself, given that I have the key to a 2024 F-type convertible—the last new Jaguar I'll drive for a while and certainly the last one that'll have much in common with the cars in this driveway. I don't know if you've been paying attention, but Jaguar is in its *Eat, Pray, Love* phase, on a journey of self-discovery that most definitely does not include supercharged V-8s. I have a feeling my neighbor will be disappointed about that. And, as is so often the case, I am right.

His name is Kemp Neal, and besides the visible Jaguars, his garage includes an XJ coupe that he's owned for 40 years. Kemp's father had an XK-150 and an E-type, and his brother has an E-type now. Since Kemp is busy working on the trunk panel of yet another British car—a 2006 Bentley Continental GT—we agree that I should return in a couple of days for a Jaguar meetup.

When I do, Kemp's brother, John, is there with his E-type droptop. "My first Jag was a Mark 1 when I was in college," Kemp says. "John gave it to me because it had a bad transmission. I figured out that it used a Borg-Warner from an old Studebaker, so I went to a junkyard that had 10 of them and bought them all for $50. Eventually, I cut a hole in the floorboard so I could fix the transmission without removing it." This sounds like the kind of origin story that would lead to a lifetime of Camry ownership, but Kemp doesn't mind the foibles that old Jags present. And there are a few.

"I drove the XJR to New York to look at another Jag, and when I got there, the trunk wouldn't open. So to get my luggage, I had to cut a hole behind the seat and pull the emergency release with a coat hanger." A stuck trunk also afflicted the Bentley, hence the work on the trim panel. "I ended up having to take it to the dealer," he says. "They won't tell me how they got it open, but I think you have to go in through the taillight—you pull it out with a toilet plunger." Here I will point out that Kemp's wife drives a Toyota.

Kemp scours the country for cars. The S-type came from California, and he flew out to purchase it. When I ask whether he road-tripped it back, he replies, "No, I'm not that trusting of British cars." This is a surprisingly pragmatic statement from someone who owns six Jaguars.

I ask the brothers their thoughts on the Type 00, the new concept car. Kemp replies, "That monstrosity? I think one challenge is that Jaguars have never cost that much, and then all of a sudden you're going to ask $150,000?" Jaguar hasn't specified a price for its next model, but either way, both men agree the company needs to do something.

"I'm 77, and he's 70," John says. "So you see the problem." Actually, I see another problem, in that the newest Jag of theirs is 20 years old. I ask whether either of them has ever bought a new Jaguar. Nope. They like old Jaguars, which, unfortunately, are not what Jaguar sells.

A drive in the F-type elicits admiration, particularly for the curves of the fenders—a subtle modern echo of the E-type—and the tunes played by the supercharged 5.0-liter V-8. Kemp, though, has doubts about the motorized HVAC ductwork. "That will definitely break," he says. "The vents in my XKs are manual, and they're broken."

I doubt that potential HVAC hiccups would dissuade a guy who once collected 10 spare transmissions, but depreciation certainly would, and this car costs about $92,000. Meanwhile, used vehicles that are essentially the same are available for $30,000 all day long. "I'll let someone else take that beating," he says.

But he's not ruling out the F-type entirely. This is, after all, the last Jaguar as we know it, the highest evolution of the company's front-engine, two-seat formula. Glancing from the F-type to the arc of cars wrapping around his driveway, Kemp says, "I've probably got space for one more."

ELANA SCHERR

If driving feels like a sin or a shameful act, know that your car can be a lifeboat to those in need.

"MEALS ON WHEELS!" Mark Luevano sang into the screen door of a cute bungalow in Culver City, California. "Oh hi, Mark," an elderly woman said as she gently nudged an equally elderly poodle out of the way to make room for us to set down a fragrant bag of fresh dill and greens on her foyer table. "How are your kids?"

The kids were well, and after reporting such, we climbed back into Luevano's Ford Mustang Mach-E and checked the address for our next stop. Luevano has been volunteering with Culver Palms Meals on Wheels (CPMOW) for several years, and he was happy to let me ride along for his Friday drop-offs. It didn't take long—we covered his route of about 10 deliveries in just over an hour, even with conversations about kids at one home and about fishing at another. "It's not just feeding people," he says. "It's about checking in on them, making sure they feel cared about."

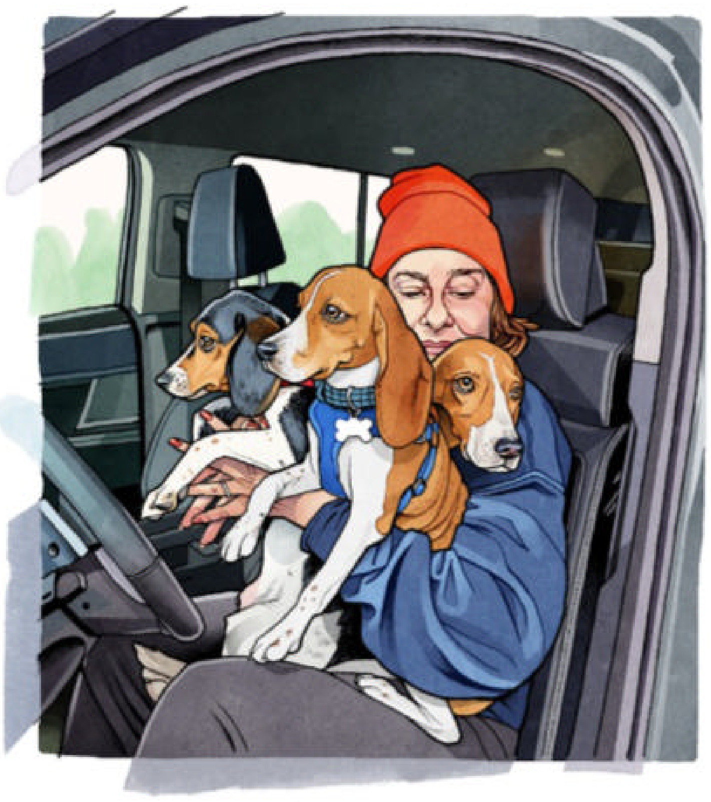
CPMOW has been feeding its neighbors in West L.A. since 1974. It's just one of thousands of independent programs under the Meals on Wheels America umbrella providing food to homebound or disabled older people at low or even no cost. Some bigger programs use official vans for deliveries, but it all started with volunteers loading up their personal vehicles. Daryl Twerdahl made her first delivery with the St. Vincent Meals on Wheels program in L.A. in 1989, not that she needed to tell me the date once she described the vehicles used: "the kind of funny-looking, sleek station wagons that were right after the woodies and just before everybody got into SUVs." Twerdahl and her friends would fill their Ford Taurus wagons with casseroles and soups and make sure every senior in the community had been fed and checked in on. "It was so personal, to use your own car," she said, "but even if you don't have a station wagon, I would encourage you to go to volunteer."

I met Twerdahl and Luevano a few days after volunteering for an entirely different sort of motorized mitzvah. I'd spent the previous week helping transport rescue dogs from a crowded shelter in the Midwest to new homes in the Pacific Northwest. It's a common problem for an animal rescue in one place to have, say, too many retrievers, while in another state, there's not a Lab to be found for adoption. The solution: bring the dogs where the homes are. As part of Operation Frodo 2024, I joined a caravan of 20 other dog lovers to transport 23 beagles from Iowa to Oregon.

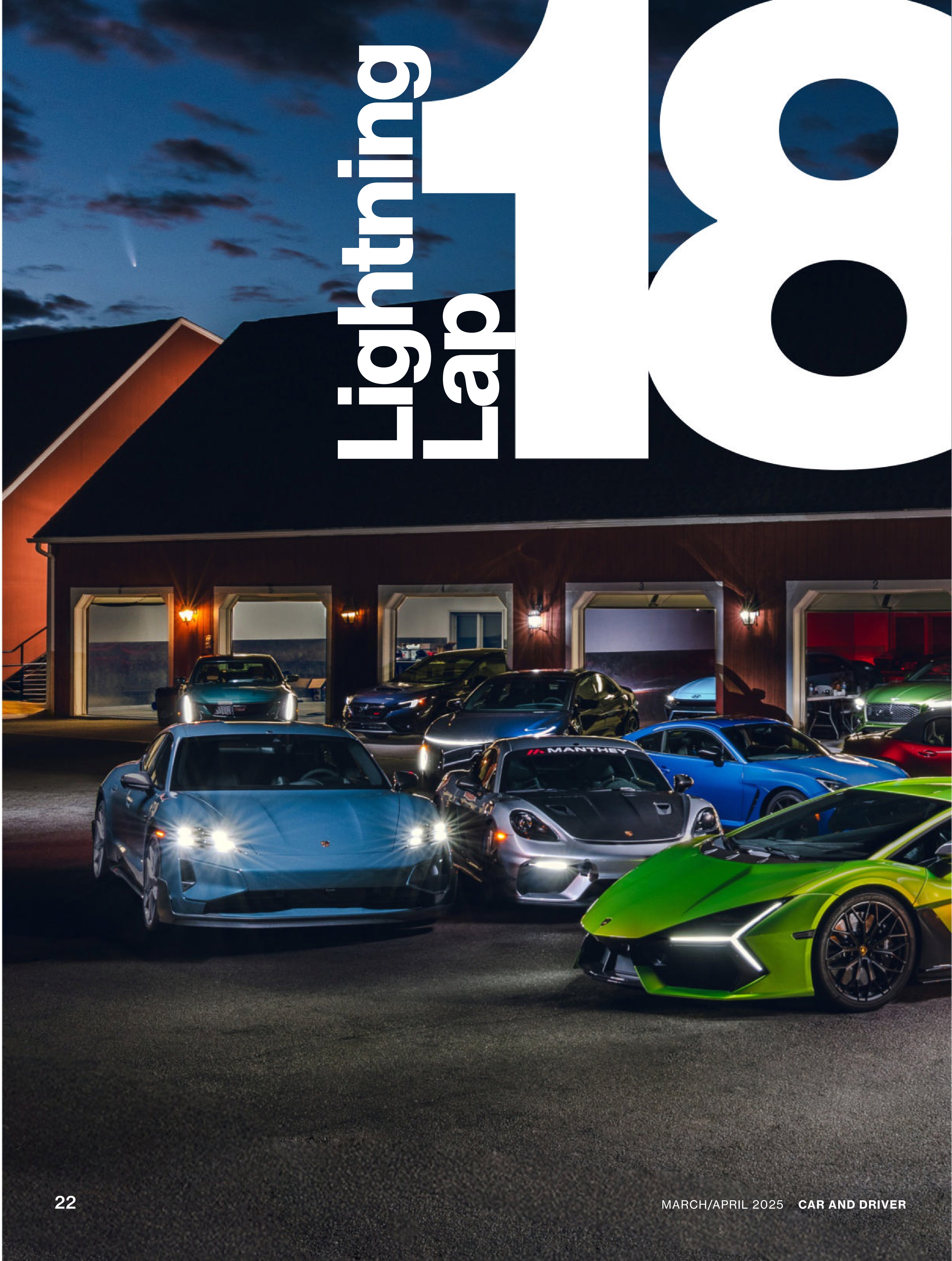
This was the third year that the group had moved dogs across the U.S., and we worked with military precision. Well, as much precision as can be expected with two dozen pups doing maypole dances around any human foolish enough to stand still. Shout-out to the night clerk at the pet-friendly Boise Airport La Quinta Inn, who somehow managed to find and catch an escaped cat for one guest while also arranging for maintenance to rescue one of our beagles, who had locked herself in a bathroom. Somehow, no beagles were lost. All learned some leash skills and developed a taste for new-car luxury after riding in one of six vehicles loaned by Ford, Genesis, Hyundai, Kia, Mercedes-Benz, and Subaru for the mission. But, to paraphrase Twerdahl, you don't need a fancy SUV to make a difference. The important part was that we helped bring the dogs to loving new families—who hopefully have a contact for a good locksmith. Operation Frodo accepts volunteers and donations, as do local shelters, in case you're not up for a cross-country trek with a hound singing the song of its people in the back seat.

If you like the idea of charitable vehicular acts but want to do it off-road, look into the Gambler 500, a silly organization of hooptie shenanigans with the very serious goal of trail cleanup. It's a rally with no set finish line, other than a truck bed full of trash and the warm glow of doing right. If you like that idea but work alone, download the Sons of Smokey app, a geocaching guide to dump sites that allows users to mark areas in need of cleanup or hunt down abandoned boats and RVs to haul off for karma points and a better outdoors experience for all of us.

Volunteer drivers can improve the world around them in many ways, whether they're taking veterans to medical appointments or delivering toy donations. The greatest value of a car is the freedom to go wherever you want. Why not make that somewhere you're needed?



Lightning Lap 18



A lap time might be the best distillation of a vehicle's performance. No other single number more effectively sums up a car's acceleration, braking, and handling abilities. VIR's grueling 4.1-mile Grand Course is the best place we've found to acquire that number.

by David Beard, Rich Ceppos, Austin Irwin, and Dave VanderWerp

photography by Michael Simari and Marc Urbano

FOR ONE WEEK EACH YEAR, we descend on a piece of hilly automotive heaven in southern Virginia to see how quickly a selection of cars can lap a racetrack—the test we call Lightning Lap. The Grand Course at Virginia International Raceway (VIR) is the closest facsimile of the Nürburgring Nordschleife we can find without flying over an ocean. The 4.1-mile course may not be as long as that German one, but it is every bit as demanding.

This is our 18th installment, and the rules are slightly more structured than Can-Am's run-whatcha-brung rulebook. Slightly. Regular spots in the Lightning Lap run groups are reserved for unmodified production cars—vehicles you could conceivably purchase at your local dealer. Classes are formed by vehicle price. We've lapped family sedans and minivans, but no PR department has called us back when we've asked for a pickup truck, until this year. A group of editors drive the cars for time to allow us to give you the firsthand story of the lap. We could hire pros, but pros aren't prose pros. Editor-in-chief Tony Quiroga calls this "employee retention week" for a reason. Strap in for the most intense driving of the year.

The Contenders

This year we gathered 13 production vehicles, including three EVs and five sedans. Oh yeah, and one pretty quick electric pickup in the LLPRO class (turn to page 38 if you can't wait). As always, we determine Lightning Lap classes by the cost of the vehicle, including all the performance-enhancing options you'd need to re-create our lap time. We call this the "base" price here. The lap time is the quickest complete lap we were able to record.

	BASE PRICE*/ PRICE AS TESTED	POWER, HP	WEIGHT, LB	LB/HP
LL1 (UP TO $39,999)				
HYUNDAI ELANTRA N	**$34,850/$35,320**	**276**	**3242**	**11.7**
MAZDA MX-5 MIATA CLUB	**$38,470/$39,065**	**181**	**2350**	**13.0**
SUBARU BRZ tS	**$36,465/$36,465**	**228**	**2857**	**12.5**
LL2 ($40,000–$74,999)				
HYUNDAI IONIQ 5 N	**$67,575/$67,785**	**641**	**4858**	**7.6**
SUBARU WRX tS	**$46,875/$47,270**	**271**	**3428**	**12.6**
LL3 ($75,000–$139,999)				
CADILLAC CT5-V BLACKWING	**$135,890/$145,580**	**668**	**4137**	**6.2**
LL4 ($140,000–$279,999)				
MERCEDES-AMG GT63	**$196,550/$209,450**	**577**	**4235**	**7.3**
LUCID AIR SAPPHIRE	**$253,400/$253,400**	**1003**	**5319**	**5.3**
PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS MANTHEY RACING	**$256,260/$265,600**	**493**	**3186**	**6.5**
PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO GT	**$235,360/$245,660**	**937**	**5123**	**5.5**
LL5 ($280,000 AND ABOVE)				
BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED	**$324,070/$391,175**	**771**	**5443**	**7.1**
LAMBORGHINI REVUELTO	**$625,958/$729,458**	**1001**	**4284**	**4.3**
McLAREN ARTURA SPIDER	**$319,918/$388,793**	**690**	**3575**	**5.2**

**INCLUDES PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING OPTIONS.*

STUDENT DRIVER
ROOKIE ROLLN'

3:15.6

Mazda MX-5 Miata Club LL1
Tires: Bridgestone Potenza S001
205/45R-17 84W

When a Mazda Miata comes to Lightning Lap, it's always a David among Goliaths. This year two cars in the competition each produce over 1000 horsepower. This MX-5 Miata Club? It has 181 adorable little ponies. And talk about a lightweight. The 5443-pound Bentley Continental GT Speed carries more than the Miata's total weight across its front axle. Yet, with every visit to VIR, this Corgi of cars becomes a bit quicker.

We gained nearly a second on the 2019 Miata RF between the top of the Climbing Esses and the exit of Oak Tree onto the Back Straight. Newfound stability on the long downhill off-camber menace known as South Bend allowed us to turn in at 4.7 mph faster than before.

Much of that stability is due to the Club's new limited-slip differential (also on the Grand Touring manual). It increases the amount of lock under braking, helping to keep the rear end stable and secure. It's now easier to get the most out of the brakes when you stand on them at 116.7 mph barreling into Turn 1 and at 109.8 mph on the Back Straight. The retuned steering rack increases sensitivity to inputs. It's so sensitive that we goofed up the entry to the Climbing Esses a few times before settling in and getting it right. When you do get it right, the Miata will let you keep the throttle steady all the way through the uphill climb. Get it wrong and stray too far into

After a couple of days of instruction and learning every corner, Lightning Lap rookie Austin Irwin flew solo and wrestled the Miata Club to an impressive lap time.

the curbing, and the light and softly sprung Miata gets upset and requires some gathering up.

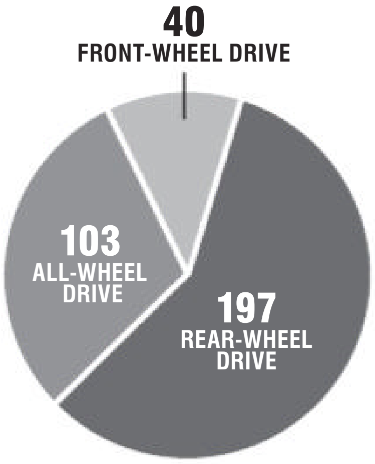
A few laps were botched by our left kneecap pressing into the stability-control on/off switch. Of the settings, we found DSC-Track to be as lenient as the rules at Grandma's house. It allows for plenty of freedom, such as a quick and controllable slide down the entry of Hog Pen.

A few corners before that, in the last long, sweeping, left-right corners of the Infield, the Miata engages in an amusing oversteer. Keeping the momentum is critical since the Miata can't make up much time with its engine, but the little two-seater happily obliges as it leans and bounces off from one curb to the next. The saying "Fun cars don't have to be fast" rings true.

Over nearly 10 years, the current generation, dubbed ND, has chipped away at lap times. In 2015, the first ND Miata we ran at Lightning Lap, with 155 horsepower on tap, posted a 3:20.8. When the ND2 added 26 horses, the retractable-hardtop RF model sliced off 3.6 seconds. And while power is unchanged in this updated ND3, its chassis tweaks have shaved another 1.6 seconds and moved it ahead on the leaderboard.

Power Wheels

Of the 340 production cars that have ever competed in Lightning Lap, there have been 197 rear-drivers, 103 with all-wheel drive, and 40 front-drivers. Not surprisingly, 31 of those front-drivers hail from the most affordable LL1 class.



3:11.1

Subaru BRZ tS LL1
Tires: Michelin Pilot Sport 4
215/40R-18 85Y

In the gym, repetition builds muscle. On a racetrack, repetition builds muscle memory. The more laps you can string together, the more you get into a comfortable rhythm while fine-tuning your line, pushing braking points deeper, and learning to ride a car's cornering limits. The BRZ tS enabled the continuous lapping that builds confidence and speed—something the BRZ Limited we tested here three years ago couldn't do.

The difference is in the stop, not the go. New Brembo high-performance calipers—four-piston front, two-piston rear tugging on larger rotors—are major contributors to the tS's ability to weather continuous lapping. Previously, the BRZ was one-and-done as the stock brakes faded after a single flying lap, losing significant stopping power and killing lap time while spiking our heart rate. They also required several cooldown laps to recover, making it difficult to eke out lap-to-lap improvements.

In our normal testing, the Brembos don't result in appreciably shorter stopping distances compared with the old brakes, but at VIR, they proved far more fade resistant and able to haul down the BRZ from triple-digit speeds repeatedly. That enabled us to go 1.3 seconds quicker per lap in a car with the same power, the same tires, and the same tail-happy cornering balance as three years ago (we discerned no handling difference from the tS-specific Hitachi dampers).

Virtually all the improvement came in Sector 3, which includes two of the slowest parts of the track and ones that require simultaneous steering and braking inputs: into the Oak Tree complex, where you're going from 100.2 mph to 44.1, and the late apex right-hander off the Back Straight that calls for you to scrub 84.1 mph

Those gold calipers (below) are the cornerstone of what makes the BRZ tS a joy to lap: fade-free brakes.

before turning in. These two spots probably hold more time; our final attempt was pushed into the afternoon, when the track temperatures rise, so we didn't find the additional second per lap we expected after swapping to fresh tires.

Still, the BRZ tS's brake upgrade illustrates the value of consistent, worry-free stopping power. It now enables the lap-after-lap reps that make it a fully track-capable sports car—giving us another reason to love it.

3:10.4

Subaru WRX tS LL2
Tires: Bridgestone Potenza S007 245/35R-19 93Y

On a track, we want a car that's consistent, responding predictably to steering, braking, and throttle inputs lap after lap. No alarms and no surprises, please. Even pros want that in their race cars. Along with speed, of course. We're happy to report the Subaru WRX tS brought more consistency to VIR than the standard WRX we flogged here two years ago, as well as a little more speed.

The big enabler is the tS's new Brembo brake setup—six-piston fronts, two-piston rears, and larger rotors—courtesy of the TR-spec WRX. The tS also inherits the TR's Recaro sport seats, along with its wheels and 245/35R-19 Bridgestone Potenza S007 summer tires, up from 18-inch Dunlop SP Sport Maxx GT 600As of the same width. Adaptive dampers from the WRX GT complete the package.

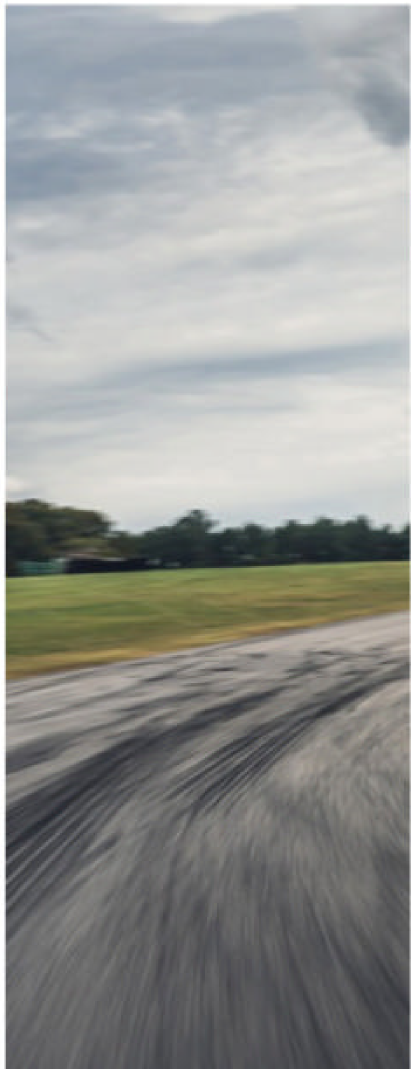
Around VIR's many turns, the tS understeered so massively that we thought the front rubber had melted away. The upside to this front-biased cornering balance is that it made the tS feel virtually spinproof.

In the competition against the standard WRX, the tS emerged victorious by 1.2 seconds. It clipped chunks of time out of Sectors 1 and 4, two places that emphasize cornering grip and agility. That improvement was a possible byproduct of the new adaptive dampers and tires. The tS gained a combined 1.5 seconds in those sectors, though it gave back several tenths in the track's final corner.

But it's the tS's new brakes that made lapping VIR less stressful. Two years ago, we wished the standard WRX had better stoppers. Wish granted. The new setup proved indefatigable, never showing a hint of fade. That gave us the confidence to nail them hard in the braking zones and trail them past the turn-in point.

Taken together, the changes to the tS confirmed that it's a real track-day machine now. It's quick enough to entertain experts, stable enough for newbies to learn on, able to lap continuously until the tank runs dry, and unshakably consistent—something track drivers of all stripes will appreciate. We sure did.

Like the BRZ that also wears tS badges, the WRX (above) has vastly improved brakes. If not for excessive understeer, it may have been closer to the Elantra N (below).



Bentleys were a staple at racetracks 100 years ago. They were known to be big, heavy, and fast back then too.

3:06.4

Hyundai Elantra N LL1
Tires: Michelin Pilot Sport 4S
245/35ZR-19 (93Y) HN

The Elantra N's appearance at VIR this year constitutes a Lightning Lap mulligan. When we had an Elantra N at the 2023 running of our track event, we rued that Hyundai hadn't sent a second set of tires, so we set its official time on well-worn rubber. We posited that a fresh set of running shoes would improve the N's lap time by more than a second.

Hyundai took us up on our offer and sent another six-speed-manual version of its compact sports sedan, this time with the extra rubber needed to set the fastest possible lap. The 2024 N we drove is essentially the same as the 2022 model we ran last time but with a handful of minor updates aimed at making it more trackworthy, including urethane rear-suspension bushings, a revised front fascia claimed to improve engine and brake cooling, and new forged wheels that reduce unsprung mass by a claimed 33 pounds.

As to that prediction, we were, um, close. The N's 3:06.4 lap time was 0.9 second quicker than before, with the added grip of the fresh rubber showing in Turn 1, where we recorded a peak of 0.97 g versus 0.95 for the older car. The N was quicker this year in all but the final sector and zipped 0.4 second quicker through Sectors 2 and 4, which zigzag through multiple lefts and rights. Its improved time came despite lower straight-line velocity—mysteriously, its 129.0-mph top speed was 4.9 mph down on the older N's. Oh, and to put its lap time into perspective, it's a half-second quicker than the 518-hp Mercedes-Benz E63 AMG we ran in 2011.

Nothing about the Elantra's basic nature changed since we pushed its limits two years ago. It remains great fun to sling around VIR thanks to sharp steering, approachable handling limits, and strong brakes—as happy on the track as it is fun on the street.

3:00.7

Bentley Continental GT Speed LL5
Tires: Pirelli P Zero PZ4 Elect
F: 275/35ZR-22 (104Y) PNCS BH
R: 315/30ZR-22 (107Y) PNCS BH

"How much quicker will it be?" is the question usually bouncing around in our helmets when we belt into a redesigned model at Lightning Lap. That was the case with Bentley's new Continental GT Speed, which trades a 12-cylinder powertrain for a plug-in-hybrid V-8 setup that makes 121 more horsepower. The surprising answer came right away, in Turn 1.

In that first corner, the best we could muster was a mere 0.89 g, way down from the 0.96 g of the last GT Speed. The new car wears Bentley-spec Pirelli P Zero PZ4 summer tires just like its predecessor did and in precisely the same sizes, but they're very different donuts: The new ones get "Elect" branding on their sidewalls, indicating that low rolling resistance is a priority.

The new GT's hybrid system also results in a 393-pound weight gain. Added mass and less grip mean the new car is slower than the old one in every sector. The biggest deficit comes in the tight Infield section, where it falls 1.7 seconds behind. The hybrid system suffered a few hiccups

Dialing in the correct tire pressure (far left) is critical but useful only when the tires are on the ground (left).

and bobbles during our lapping, but when it's working properly, as it was on our quickest lap, you can feel the instant squirt of electric assist on corner exit. And despite a 4.2-mph-lower exit speed onto the Front Straight, the new Bentley pulled to 156.6 mph, 3.0 mph higher than before. So, the additional power is clearly trying to help the cause.

It's possible to induce a tail-out slide when you're driving aggressively, and the Conti's brakes never gave up, but this big, cushy coupe with a luxuriously muted V-8 roar is frankly the least suited to the track of any of this year's field. "Power is nothing without control" is a slogan Pirelli has used for decades. That explains precisely why the new GT Speed is 4.5 seconds behind its predecessor.

3:00.3

Hyundai Ioniq 5 N LL2
Tires: Pirelli P Zero PZ4 Elect 275/35ZR-21 103Y PNCS HN

We ran the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N's platform-mate, the 576-hp Kia EV6 GT, at Lightning Lap last year, so it's natural to compare the performance of these brothers from different mothers. How much would Hyundai's upgrades to the 5 N's structure, chassis, tires, software, and motors improve its lap time over the EV6 GT? And would the changes tame the EV6's dicey handling?

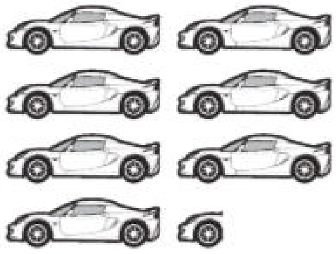
The answer is unequivocally yes. The 5 N crushed the EV6 GT's time by 4.6 seconds. It clawed around Turn 1 at a sports-car–like 0.98 g versus the GT's 0.93 g, and it rushed into the Climbing Esses at 133.4 mph, almost 10 mph faster. It was quicker through all the track's sectors and faster virtually everywhere. We realized after our third and quickest run that on VIR's straights, we'd forgotten to punch the N Grin Boost button, which takes power from 601 horses to 641 for 10 seconds and may have cut a few more tenths. After a lunchtime recharge, we tried a final run, using N Grin Boost, but the afternoon heat degraded track conditions, and we couldn't find more time.

The 5 N has a dizzying number of settings. Here's our setup for VIR: Track mode with N Race on to maintain the battery for hot-lapping, the dampers in Sport (one rung down from the stiffest setting), stability control off, and the battery charged to at least 95 percent. Stable and sure-footed, with mild understeer, surprisingly tactile steering, and capable brakes, it was a 4858-pound cube of fun to drive. We barely noticed the powertrain's silence—sounds and simulated shifting are off in these settings—but the instantaneous torque meant midcorner accelerator adjustments required barely moving a big toe.

On track, the 5 N's need to recharge limits it to maybe two 20-minute sessions. Absent a trackside fast-charger—we shared Lucid's portable unit—the Ioniq 5 N isn't going to log many laps in a day. The 5 N's weight and speed tax the tires too, turning them greasy after a couple of laps. It would kill at autocrosses, though, which rack up only a few miles of flat-out running per event, thus eliminating the need for recharging. Guess where we'll be taking it next.

Heavy Lifting

The Conti, the 5 N, and the GT63 weigh a combined 14,536 pounds, or the equivalent of 7.3 2006 Lotus Elises, the lightest production car we've lapped.



Mercedes's man whispers words of encouragement (below right). Maybe it was the family spätzle recipe. Our *Deutsch* is – how do you say? – *Scheiße*.

2:50.3

Mercedes-AMG GT63 LL4
Tires: Michelin Pilot Sport S5
F: 295/30ZR-21 (102Y) MO1
R: HL305/30ZR-21 (107Y) MO1

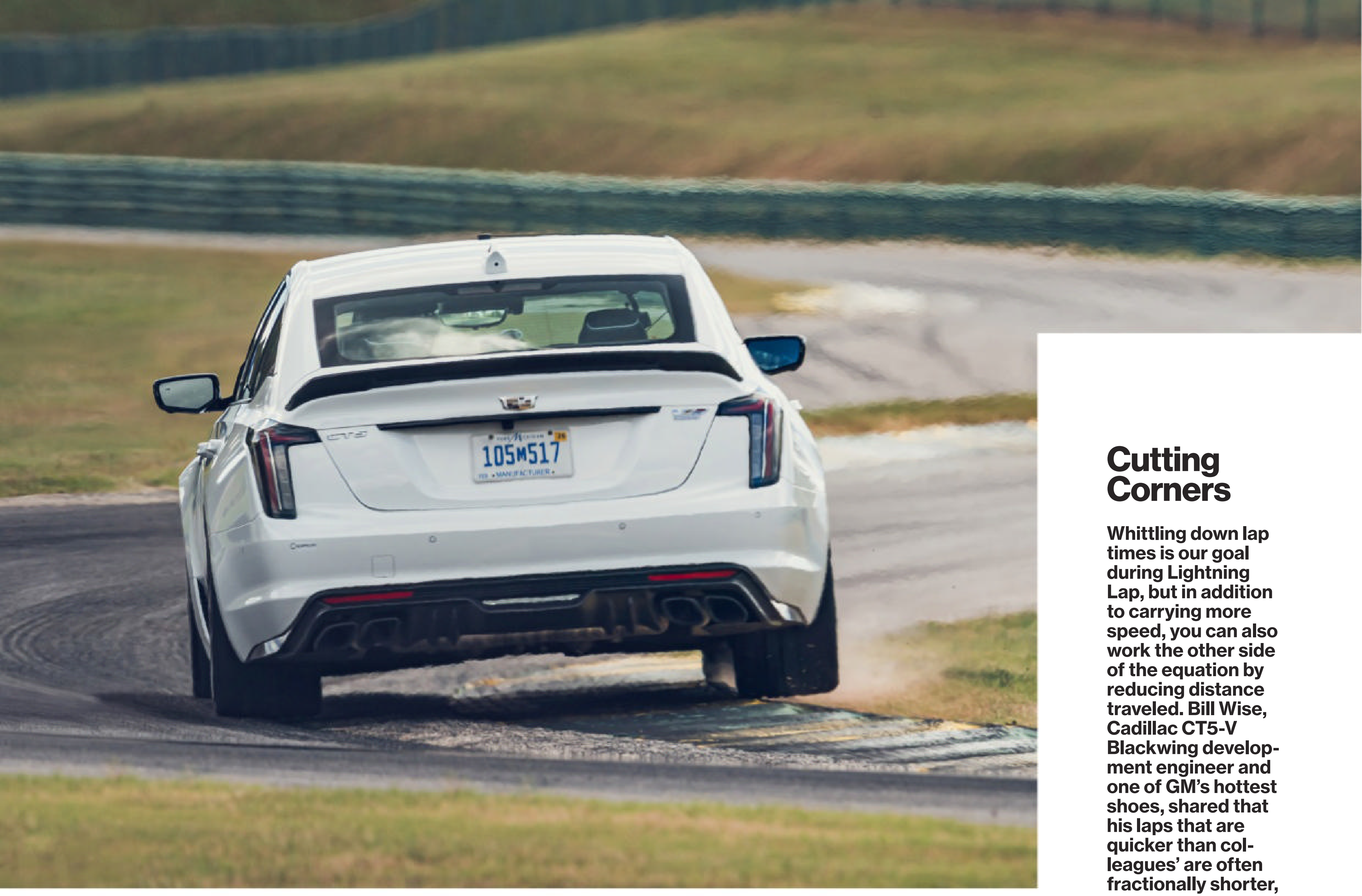
Whether it be around your belly or on four wheels, extra weight is never a good thing. The latest Mercedes-AMG GT63 coupe is heavy at 4235 pounds—567 more than the previous GT R—and we can't help but wonder why these AMGs have packed on so much weight.

Apparently, all-wheel drive and a back seat are a hearty meal, but despite being hefty, the GT63 is a joy to push to its high limits. It hides its mass with a rear axle that steers, adding nimbleness in slow corners and stability in high-speed bends. Put it in Race mode and toggle on the Master stability-control setting, and you'll feel confident getting up to speed quickly. The steering gives back just enough to keep the driver in the loop. It's easy to find this car's limits and stay there.

The GT's 2:50.3 lap outguns the mechanically identical SL's by 2.3 seconds despite that both cars have 577 horsepower. Putting all the horses to work out of corners is easy, and the large optional carbon-ceramic rotors absorbed the abuse leveled at them. The biggest difference between the SL and the GT is the tires. The SL rolled on Michelin Pilot Sport 4S rubber; for the GT, Michelin's new Pilot Sport S5 got the call. This is our first experience with the Pilot Sport S5 at VIR.

The new S5s provide more grip everywhere. Exiting the downhill right dubbed Hog Pen, the GT is 2.0 mph faster than the SL and stays ahead all the way down the Front Straight. In Turn 1, the GT hangs on at 1.07 g's, up 0.04 on the SL, and leaves the corner faster too. Added grip aside, the tires' consistency and resistance to fatigue over an 18.5-gallon tank impressed us. We wish the brake pedal showed the same steadiness, as it grew softer as we stacked on the laps.

The forthcoming GT63 Pro's upgraded brakes have the potential to remedy that problem, but we'll be more interested in its Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R tires. And, hopefully, the Pro gets a prescription for Ozempic.



2:47.9

Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing LL3
Tires: Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R
F: 285/35ZR-19 (103Y) MO1
R: 305/30ZR-19 (102Y)

For 2025, the big Blackwing sports a facelift and, far more intriguing, a Precision package, a $9000 bundle of chassis upgrades such as stiffer springs and bushings, more aggressive alignment, and stickier Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R tires.

Despite the extra stiffness, the Blackwing still inhales curbing with the best (thanks, magnetorheological dampers). Its adjustable Performance Traction Management, which allows you to dial in the amount of traction- and stability-control intervention, remains a wonderful sidekick, trimming power to optimize traction. You can hear it working when the exhaust note goes from rip-roaring to garbled. But it's acting out of necessity, as turning everything off was a short-lived experiment in how sending 668 horsepower through two tires equals a lot of powerslides.

A quick lap in the Blackwing requires a tight line [see "Cutting Corners," right] and attacking apexes early. Getting the fastest lap needs to happen when the tires are fresh, because after one lap, the grip slightly subsides, and the Blackwing settles into a pace that's about two seconds slower per lap. But unlike most street cars, especially luxury sedans, the Blackwing is happy to hot-lap for the duration of its 17.4 gallons of fuel, which translates to about eight 4.1-mile laps. And the carbon-ceramic brakes (a $9000 option required to spec the Precision package) never show a hint of fade.

Compared with the Blackwing we ran three years ago, the new Precision-package car is a little quicker nearly everywhere: a couple of miles per hour through the Climbing Esses, where the new car is easier to place, a few more through the off-camber left that follows, and an average of nearly two miles per hour in the tight Infield. Times through Sectors 1 and 4 improved by a half-second apiece and in 2 and 5 by a few tenths each. In Sector 3, the two cars were in a near dead heat, leaving the latest Blackwing ahead by 1.5 seconds. That means the CT5 pulls in front of the Mercedes-AMG GT 4-Door and, surprisingly, the C8 Corvette Z51. The lap comparison with the Porsche Panamera Turbo S, the quickest gas-powered four-door, is interesting, with the Cadillac ahead by 0.8 second at Oak Tree but the Porsche reeling back all of that time, primarily in the Infield, leading to a photo finish in which the Caddy comes up a tenth short.

Cutting Corners

Whittling down lap times is our goal during Lightning Lap, but in addition to carrying more speed, you can also work the other side of the equation by reducing distance traveled. Bill Wise, Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing development engineer and one of GM's hottest shoes, shared that his laps that are quicker than colleagues' are often fractionally shorter, which prompted us to look at that detail from this year's field. No doubt thanks to Wise's excellent coaching, our corner clipping and curb jumping in the CT5 resulted in the shortest lap of 21,533 feet, or 4.08 miles. At the Blackwing's 87.9-mph average speed, every 13 feet equates to a tenth of a second, and the difference between the CT5's lap and the longest, in the Ioniq 5 N, which traveled 71 feet farther, is worth more than a half-second. Of course, there are limits to the possible gains, as hugging the inside of the track for the entirety of a lap reduces speed enough not to be advantageous. Some vehicles are so unsettled by curbing that they lose time, which requires a wider line to find the fastest time.

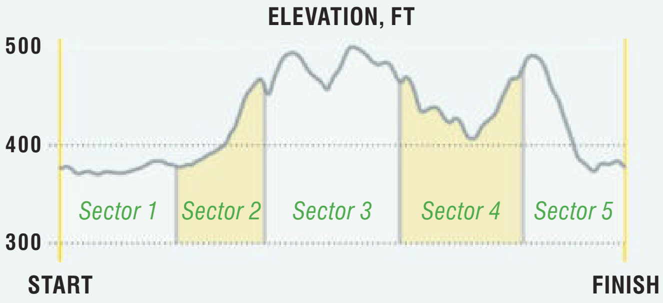
FAST TRACK

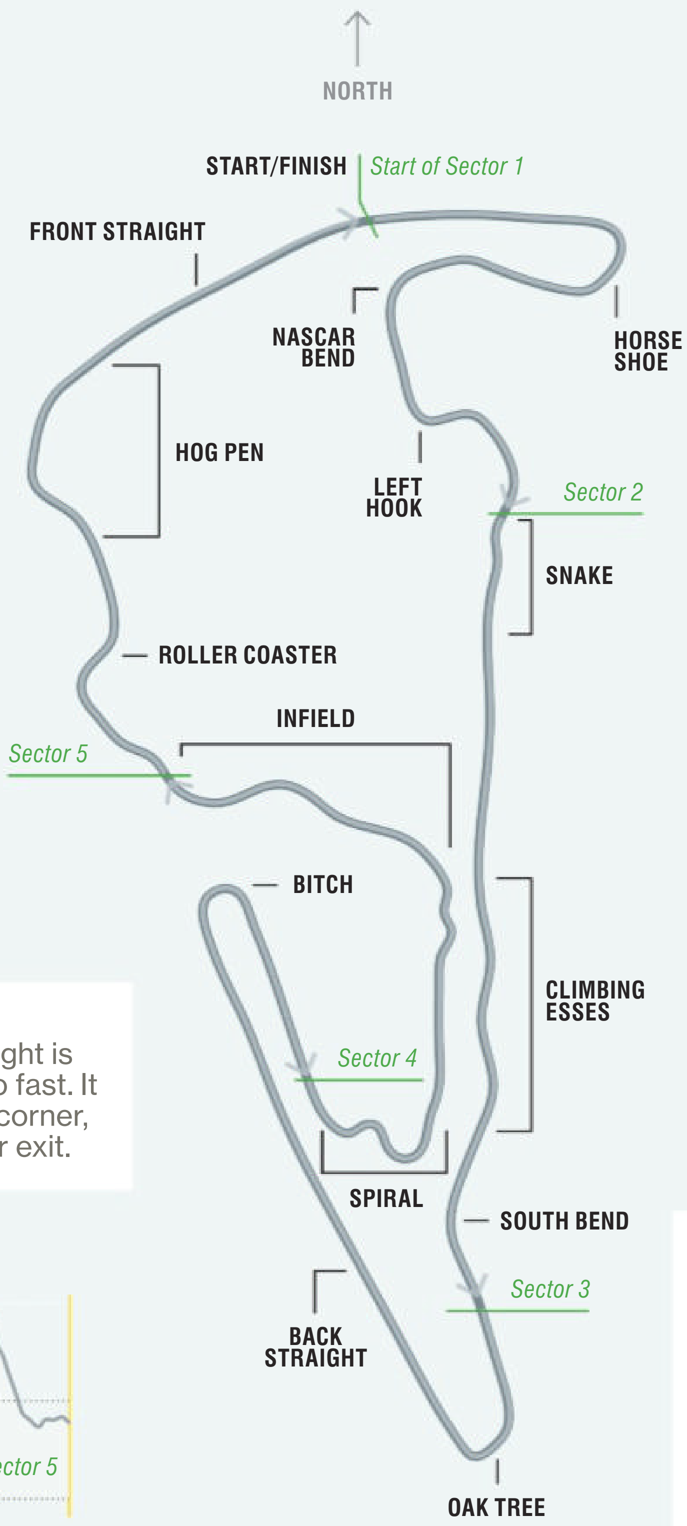
TREASURED MAP

A closer look at the crucible we call Lightning Lap.

HAIRY POINT: HOG PEN
This fast right-hander runs down a hill and empties onto the Front Straight. Strike the curbing on the left under braking and then turn in toward the curbing on the right. Get back on the throttle early to get the most out of the long straight that follows. Running wide here could mean mowing a lot of grass.

PATIENCE POINT: BITCH
The corner at the end of the Back Straight is slow, which usually means you go in too fast. It also goes off-camber as you leave the corner, so be patient with the throttle on corner exit.





VIRGINIA INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY GRAND COURSE, 4.1 MILES

HAIRY POINT: NASCAR BEND
This left looks easy but tests a driver's mettle and a car's stability as it demands you to brake deep into the turn-in point. The GT4 RS Manthey clips this apex at 69.4 mph while pulling 1.25 g's.

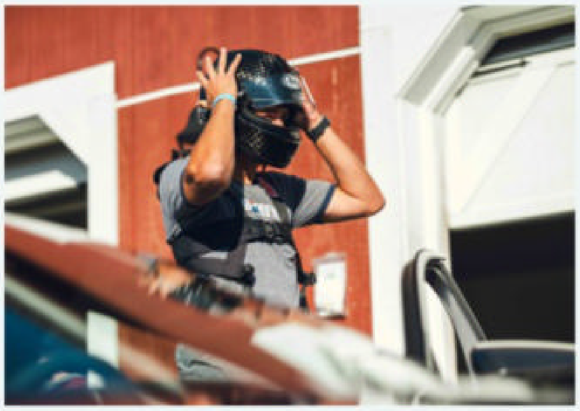
PATIENCE POINT: LEFT HOOK TO SNAKE
Following the NASCAR Bend's stress is a throwaway corner that you sacrifice to maximize exit speed for the straight leading to the Climbing Esses. Get too aggressive with the throttle in Left Hook, and you have to lift before clobbering the exit curbing.

HAIRY POINT: CLIMBING ESSES
Uphill, winding, and unforgiving. Get it wrong, and the runoff area is essentially nonexistent. The Lucid Air averages 131.2 mph here.

HAIRY POINT: SOUTH BEND
It's off-camber, meaning water would flow away from the apex, with a blind entry and a downhill exit. If it were flat, the corner might just be a kink. The GT4 RS Manthey kisses 94.1 mph while gripping at 1.19 g's. As with the Climbing Esses, the grass off the track is littered with ruts dug by the unfortunate.

THE PLAN OF ATTACK

On paper, the Grand Course is 24 turns over 4.1 miles, but there are more like 30 saws at the wheel for every lap. The methodology we employ over three days to tackle this test largely mirrors the advice in Dr. Leo Marvin's book, *Baby Steps*.



DAY ONE is devoted to getting up to speed and learning the idiosyncrasies of each car. Entering the Climbing Esses—corners that would be accompanied by a 35-mph speed-limit sign on the street—at over 100 mph isn't something you wake up angry and just do, so it takes a few laps and endorphin bursts to build confidence there and in VIR's other hairy points [see "Treasured Map," above]. The key to day one is learning how the car and the track interact.

DAY TWO starts with an earnest attempt at a lap in the morning when the track is quickest. Nail braking points and clean up lines in the slow, patience-trying corners, such as Left Hook, Oak Tree, and Bitch.

DAY THREE starts on fresh tires. After a night spent visualizing the perfect lap, go out and get that fast lap before air temperatures rise. You get, at most, three laps in each car. And it can always rain. One step at a time.

2:44.0

McLaren Artura Spider LL5
Tires: Pirelli P Zero Corsa PZC4
F: 235/35ZR-19 (91Y) MC-C
R: 295/35ZR-20 (105Y) MC-C

McLarens never roll off the car hauler short on speed, and the brand's newest junior supercar is another hallmark of its quest for velocity. Despite being down two cylinders to every other McLaren we've lapped, the Artura Spider's 596-hp twin-turbo 3.0-liter V-6 is an enthusiastic little thing. Sandwich a 94-hp electric motor between it and the crisp-shifting eight-speed dual-clutch automatic for a total of 690 horses, and the Spider reaches 162.2 mph on the Front Straight.

But a plug-in hybrid has a weight disadvantage. The Artura Spider packs on 359 pounds compared with the 600LT Spider and doesn't exit Hog Pen with the same forward momentum, ultimately coming up 3.1 mph slower on the Front Straight despite having a marginally better power-to-weight ratio. The Artura's 1.05 g's in Turn 1 can't touch the 600LT's 1.14 g's, and in the many spots around VIR where there are quick transitions, the 600LT maintains an advantage.

Though the 600LT laps 1.4 seconds quicker, the Artura is no slouch. In many ways, it's easier to drive. Rather than the 600LT's massive hit of boost brought on by the twin-turbo V-8, you get a more linear ramp up to peak power and greater confidence getting back onto the throttle on corner exit without triggering a huge slide. The Artura prefers the electronically controlled dampers' softest setting to attack VIR's curbing, and when it's time to lay into the brakes, the pedal is always firm and reassuring.

Just as in other McLarens, the Artura's electrohydraulically assisted steering is a thing of beauty, with resistance that builds naturally. And the available grip from the Pirelli P Zero Corsa PZC4 tires is broadcast in high definition.

So what if the Artura Spider is a smidge heavier and doesn't sound as good? It's an absolute joy to drive, and of the nearly 350 cars we've lapped at VIR, every gas-powered car that's been quicker has more displacement. A win is a win.

McLaren minders on the prowl, informing us that sacrificing the car's undertray and wheels to the serrated curbs of VIR is worth it for a fast time.

"SPEEDY KIWI" LOGO, 1967–80

Check Out That Bird

The three fastest recorded speeds on the Front Straight all belong to McLarens. The only other car to crack 170 mph was last year's Lucid Air Sapphire. Speedy Kiwis, indeed.

765LT: 174.6 mph
Senna: 172.9 mph
720S: 171.7 mph

California
16403

2:41.8

Porsche Taycan Turbo GT LL4
Tires: Pirelli P Zero Trofeo RS Elect
F: 265/35ZR-21 (101Y) NF0
R: 305/30ZR-21 (104Y) NF0

This may sound odd for a car with 937 horsepower, but the primary reason the Taycan finished behind the Lucid Air Sapphire is a relative lack of power. Well, more a lack of power deployment. Sustained thrust in an EV is all about heat management, and Porsche engineered this Taycan for a 12.9-mile lap of the Nürburgring, whereas the Lucid uses all its thermal budget in a single lap of VIR. That's why the Taycan makes just 777 horsepower until you pull the right paddle to activate Attack mode—good for 10 seconds at a time. We paddled as much as we could, but the power boost can't be activated continuously, and occasionally, we got a "mode not available" message. Trying to keep tabs on this is more than a little distracting in the middle of a lap with an average speed above 90 mph.

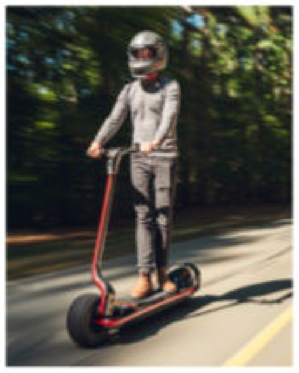
In just about every other way, the Taycan behaves like a Porsche sports car: buttoned up, easy to drive quickly, no bad surprises. The active suspension keeps this hefty sedan hunkered down and the cornering unnaturally flat. The Lucid is more prone to oversteer and leans more in corners.

But one spot where the Taycan didn't feel comfortable was in the Climbing Esses. The usual line over the inside curbing felt like it would launch the right side airborne, eroding confidence at 130 mph. So we dialed back slightly, ceding a half-second to the Lucid. The braking points are slightly later than in the Sapphire, and the 196-pound-lighter Taycan outgripped it in Turn 1 with a staggering 1.16-g average, second only to the Cayman GT4 RS Manthey Racing this year. But the speed deficit on the two straightaways alone is worth 0.6 second. Add in the slightly slower run up the Climbing Esses and various tenths here and there where the Taycan often got the jump on corner exit only to be caught under power.

A 13.4-second improvement over the previous Taycan is a massive win. But a qualifying mode, where the Porsche would give its all, and running the claimed 165-pound-lighter Weissach-package version with the large fixed wing (the first ones weren't in the U.S. in time for this year's event) would make the EV battle between Porsche and Lucid even more interesting.

Scooter McGavin

In the sea of Birds and Limes, no scooter looks better than this Red Bull Racing RBS #01. It's 68 pounds of battery and carbon fiber with a single-sided fork, like a Lefty-equipped Cannondale. Red Bull says the 1-hp scooter will do 20 mph, which we confirmed with GPS, and go about 40 miles between charges. We didn't confirm its range because the tire sidewall is the only give in the chassis, and it's a firm ride on concrete. But the wide rubber glides smoothly along a paddock's glassy asphalt. The $6500 price, though, is largely a reflection of the excess associated with Formula 1. Just be sure to put an AirTag on it because things that look this good have a way of wandering off.



12-Gun Salute

The V-12 engine is put on a pedestal for a reason. It's a smooth, melodic, and usually quite powerful way to harness six explosions per revolution. Only four of the 340 Lightning Lap cars have had one under their hood. This year's Lambo is the fastest V-12-powered car we've tested.

Lamborghini Revuelto: 2:41.3
Ferrari F12berlinetta: 2:50.8
Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV: 2:53.9
BMW M760i: 3:07.6

2:41.3

Lamborghini Revuelto LL5
Tires: Bridgestone Potenza Sport
F: 265/35ZRF-20 (99Y) L
R: 345/30ZRF-21 (111Y) L

The slight right kink on VIR's Front Straight typically isn't an event. The usual process is to hold the pedal to the floor and keep smooth hands while tracking to the apex. But in the 1001-hp Lamborghini Revuelto [see "The Mad Scramble," page 40, for a review of the Lamborghini on the street], this can be one helluva moment.

Though the Revuelto weighs 4284 pounds, its monster V-12 and three electric motors deliver stupendous acceleration. After some self-affirmation and kissing a family portrait, we convince ourself the Lambo will be fine through the kink at wide-open throttle. Think again. This money-green wedge reaches serious speed as it bends into the kink. Keeping the throttle pinned at 160 mph sends the front end skating. Nope, we're not going flat-out today. Even after lifting slightly, getting back on the gas summons 168.4 mph on the Front Straight, the fastest of this year's crop.

Any time the Revuelto is pointed straight, the world around it seemingly blurs with wild and crazy speed. Approaching the Climbing Esses at nearly 160 mph without the benefit of a big downforce package means getting off the throttle sooner than usual. On the Back Straight, this raging bull once again tops 168 mph. After rolling the tight right dubbed Bitch, the traction-control light blinks during a two-three upshift. Have we mentioned this animal has all-wheel drive?

The Lambo's mass and velocity necessitate setting our own reference point to start braking before the markers begin. But when we find the right spot, the front 10-piston calipers biting down on 16.1-inch carbon-ceramic rotors remove speed in a hurry. Despite being worked hard over and over, the brakes never show signs of giving up.

It's difficult to overlook the sheer size of the Revuelto, but thanks to rear-axle steering and torque vectoring across the front axle, it drives small in corners and tighter sections. The steering is light, and the rack is quick. Steady hands return 1.12 g's in Turn 1 compliments of massive tires. The Bridgestone Potenza Sport rubber isn't the raciest of compounds, but the 265-section-width front and 345-wide rear cling with the best non-track tires. There's even a 355 available for the rear, but that size wasn't fitted for our hot lap.

This Revuelto is just the beginning for Lamborghini's top dog. A higher-downforce package and stickier tires are sure to come, and when they do, we'll be ready to try the kink again.

California
41171

From this angle, the Revuelto reminds us of Batman's Tumbler. But it has 1001 horses, so those exhaust tips don't need an afterburner.

For nearly the cost of a base Cayman, the GT4 RS's Manthey kit turns an already impressive sports car into something sublime.

2:40.9

Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 RS
Manthey Racing LL4
Tires: Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R
F: 245/35ZR-20 (95Y) N0
R: 295/30ZR-20 (101Y) N0

To lean on the words of the late Jim Morrison, "This is the end, beautiful friend." With electrification of the Porsche 718 Boxster/Cayman looming, this is likely the last suck-squeeze-bang-blow 718 we'll hear sing its way around VIR. And a glorious swan song it is.

The 718 Cayman GT4 RS returns, this time fortified by tuning outfitter Manthey Racing. The special chassis and aero elements include dive planes, four-way adjustable coil-overs to replace the standard electronically controlled dampers, stiffer front springs, and a larger rear wing that together create a claimed 176 additional pounds of downforce at 124 mph. Plus there are carbon-fiber aero covers for the rear wheels.

With the wing trimmed out, the 493-hp 4.0-liter flat-six screams its 9000-rpm soundtrack on the way to 155.5 mph on the Front Straight, 2.2 mph slower than the stock GT4 RS. The MR kit's braided brake lines make it easier for your foot to modulate the massive carbon-ceramic brakes that goad you to brake later and deeper than you thought possible. You can, and you do. With its lower ride height, Manthey's car is incredibly stable under braking, even when you haul down from 148 to 41 mph on the Back Straight to turn in to the tight right named Bitch.

Revised alignment settings improve upon the already amazing stick of the standard GT4 RS. Grip through Turn 1 hits 1.23 g's, 0.04 more than the regular GT4 RS and near the top of the all-time list. If the rear end threatens to step out midway through the fast left called NASCAR Bend, don't worry. The connection between the steering and your brain is telepathic. Small inputs catch the rear end—the correction feels natural, repeatable, and heroic—and then you're back to wide-open throttle.

All Caymans are easy to drive fast, and the Manthey kit adds speed without increasing difficulty. It's about the closest thing to a race car you can register at the DMV. In the Climbing Esses, a snaking set of corners that rise up a hill and are as treacherous as they are thrilling [see "Treasured Map," page 33], the Manthey add-ons make going in at 139.1 mph seem like a fine idea.

Perhaps you're wondering why this spectacular machine is 0.4 second behind the GT4 RS we ran a few years ago. Executive editor K.C. Colwell set the regular car's time under different conditions, and we couldn't quite match his very fast run in the GT4 RS. Comparing the laps, we see the GT4 RS and the MR model give and take throughout. The Manthey's 133-pound mass disadvantage could be a factor, but Colwell's lap was just a little cleaner, especially in the tight and technical areas. It's easier to get up to speed faster in the Manthey version, if not to squeeze out every bit of time. This is one of the greatest sports cars ever, and if the Cayman is leaving the stage, we say, "Encore! Encore!"

Porsche and Lucid both rented a generator and a DC charger to replenish batteries, but Porsche's generator wouldn't start and Lucid's charger had an issue, so they shared. Because sharing is caring.

2:40.2

Lucid Air Sapphire LL4

Tires: Pirelli P Zero Trofeo RS Elect
F: 265/35ZR-20 (99Y) LM1
R: 295/30ZR-21 (102Y) LM1

After setting an impressive 2:44.3 lap last year—a new record for EVs and four-doors—why is the Lucid back, and how did it turn into the fastest car of the year? Tires. Lucid now offers R-compound Pirelli P Zero Trofeo RS tires, tuned to Lucid's specifications, and combines the stickier rubber with updated calibrations to take advantage of them. This is the same tire Porsche fits to the Taycan Turbo GT, making the battle between the two top electric sedans about as even as they come, although the cars are quite different to drive.

"I think the regen braking just induced major oversteer in the Infield esses," testing director Dave VanderWerp reported to the Lucid team in the paddock after a particularly attention-grabbing moment. Calibration engineer Esther Unti instantly responded, "That's definitely a thing." This is a window into driving the Lucid, which is more raw than the Porsche, demanding skillful inputs from hands and feet. The looser handling setup is also deliberate to work the rear tires more and keep the fronts from overheating.

Speaking of heat, the additional tire grip is obvious, with lateral acceleration in Turn 1 increasing from 1.09 to 1.13 g's, which means the Sapphire can use more power out of every corner. This causes the battery to get too hot to make maximum output for the entire lap, so the engineers removed a dollop of power to stay just beneath the give point, which is why the Air's peak speed is down by 2.9 mph. But this only makes the Sapphire's 4.1-second improvement more impressive, as it's now in the hunt with the fastest cars we've ever run. For example, through Sector 3—Oak Tree, down the long Back Straight, and just past the tight right known as Bitch—the Sapphire is the second quickest in Lightning Lap history, a mere half-second behind the McLaren Senna and quicker than every other McLaren and every Porsche and Corvette we've run. Sure, the Lucid can hustle, but the brakes are even more mind-boggling, with a firm pedal that remained consistent no matter what we threw at it.

The Sapphire's time put it in 10th place on the all-time leaderboard, right in the supercar mix, where most entries cost more, all weigh at least 1650 pounds less, and none have a back seat. It's as if the Sapphire doesn't know it's a 5319-pound luxury sedan—we can't believe it either.

It took 18 events, one EV startup, and four R-comp tires for a sedan to break into the all-time top 10 Lightning Lap times.

2:19.1

Ford Performance F-150 Lightning SuperTruck LLPRO

Tires: Pirelli P Zero Slick
325/705-18 NLS DHE

Last year we opened Lightning Lap to the Subaru AirSlayer and Garage 56 Chevrolet Camaro and seemingly punched a hole into an alternate universe where megadownforce and grotesque displays of power rule the land. This time around, Ford wanted to show off its new pickup.

This is no ordinary pickup. The F-150 Lightning SuperTruck is the product of Ford Performance and Austrian-based STARD. It's built to show the potential of electric race vehicles in places such as Pikes Peak. Despite having to stop for nearly 30 seconds during its Pikes Peak run to reset its electrical systems, the SuperTruck was this year's King of the Hill.

Seemingly designed on another planet, the massive front splitter, rear diffuser, rear wing, and even the little winglets where the mirrors would be have the potential to create 6000 pounds of downforce at 150 mph. To move all that air requires colossal power, and the SuperTruck's four electric motors combine for a freight-train-like 2200 horsepower.

FORD PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDI HEDRICK

Learning the ins and outs of this pickup would take more than the two laps we spent behind the wheel, but our brief experience gave us a deep appreciation for its speed, grip, handling, and at-the-limit friendliness. Without much time to learn the SuperTruck, we broke with convention and let professional racer Romain Dumas join us for a day of "work."

It didn't take long for Dumas to quickly learn the track despite the SuperTruck's roughly 50-kWh battery, which burns through 60 percent of a charge in a lap and requires a stream of dry-ice-cooled air to rapidly chill its heat exchangers between runs.

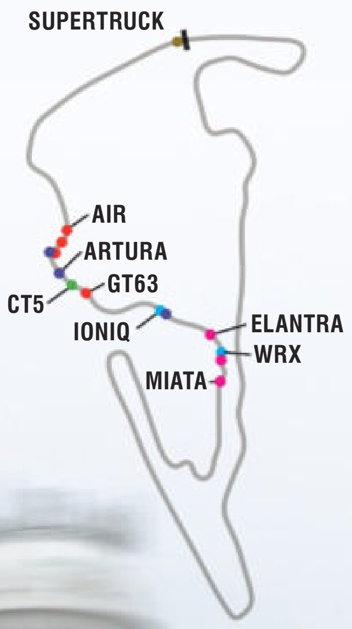
Dumas let us join him for a ride, and it's evident that the SuperTruck shares nothing with the production Lightning other than maybe the seat height. Just as we start thinking we'll do a lap to talk about the truck, Dumas instructs us to start the timer. He's going for it, and we're left hanging from the safety harness like a baby dangling from a Johnny Jump Up. The carbon-ceramic rotors and regenerative braking deliver such tremendous force that the seatbelts filet the groin. Dumas handles the steering wheel like it owes him something. And it does: a 2:25.3 lap. So, technically, we've co-piloted a record-setting lap.

With the ride height raised and the downforce reduced, Dumas sets off alone. From the flag tower, the SuperTruck sounds like an F-18 as it rips by at a blistering 191.4 mph. The Pirelli P Zero race slicks deliver 1.43 g's in Turn 1, but the Climbing Esses defy reality. Dumas enters at 187.6 mph and then brakes for the first right-hander before accelerating back up the hill and exiting the corner at 155.5 mph. In every sector, the SuperTruck's stats are just as shocking.

Flying solo, Dumas completes a lap in 2:19.1, the quickest time ever on the Grand Course and 6.5 seconds quicker than the Subaru AirSlayer that lapped last year. Until an Indy car or an F1 racer signs up, we think this one might hold the record for a while. ▪

Finishing Move

The SuperTruck's 2:19.1 is so shockingly fast that when it crosses the finish line, the Air Sapphire—this year's next-closest competitor—is 0.9 mile behind. The Miata, having just completed Spiral, might as well be in North Carolina.



The F-150 Lightning SuperTruck is the 2200-hp result of execs giving engineers the directive, "Make a pig fly."

THE MAD

AN 814-HP V-12 THAT SCREAMS TO 9400 RPM IS JUST THE

SCRAMBLE

START OF THE INTENSE EXPERIENCE THAT IS THE LAMBORGHINI REVUELTO.

BY DAN EDMUNDS / PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PAJO

THE REVUELTO IS NAMED FOR A SPANISH bull with a rebellious streak, but this new Lamborghini is more than rebellious—it's revolutionary. Its closest sibling is the Aventador it replaces because they both have a V-12 engine, but the similarity begins and ends there.

With no turbochargers, the sound of the mighty 6.5-liter V-12 is as glorious as ever. Much of it breathes better, from the reworked air intake to a compression ratio that's been jacked up from 11.8:1 to 12.6:1 and finally to an exhaust that flows better at high revs. How high are those revs? The redline is now a mind-boggling 9400 rpm, and peak output is 814 horsepower at a scorching 9250 rpm, some 45 horses and 750 revs more than the exiting Aventador Ultimae. Oh, and the engine sheds a claimed 37 pounds in the bargain.

Moreover, engineers stripped the V-12 of its forward-mounted transmission (the often maligned and always jarring seven-speed automated manual), spun it around 180 degrees, and mated it to a new eight-speed dual-clutch transaxle made by Lamborghini. Placed behind the engine as God intended, this new gearbox is only 22 inches long because it is laid out laterally around two input shafts—one for the even-numbered gears and another for the odd ones—and sits parallel to the half-shaft output flanges. Unlike in its predecessor, shifting is smooth whether you are puttering around town, hammering it in the hills, or making a quarter-mile pass. As with the best dual-clutch automatics, it's near impossible to spot the shifts in a speed trace.

The Revuelto has all-wheel drive like the Aventador, although it's provided by electric motors, not any connection to the V-12. Instead of a transmission tucked between the front seats, there's a 3.4-kWh battery pack. A 147-hp, 110-lb-ft motor buried within the transmission housing can drive the rear wheels when the conditions are right and, along with regenerative energy under braking, keeps the battery topped up.

But the front end is where the action is, because each front wheel is connected independently to its own axial-flow AC motor making 147 horsepower and 254 pound-feet. In straight-line driving, the motors either propel the front axle in unison to the tune of 187 horsepower (the battery's output limit) for a grand total of 1001 ponies, or they both recuperate significant energy while slowing down the Lamborghini.

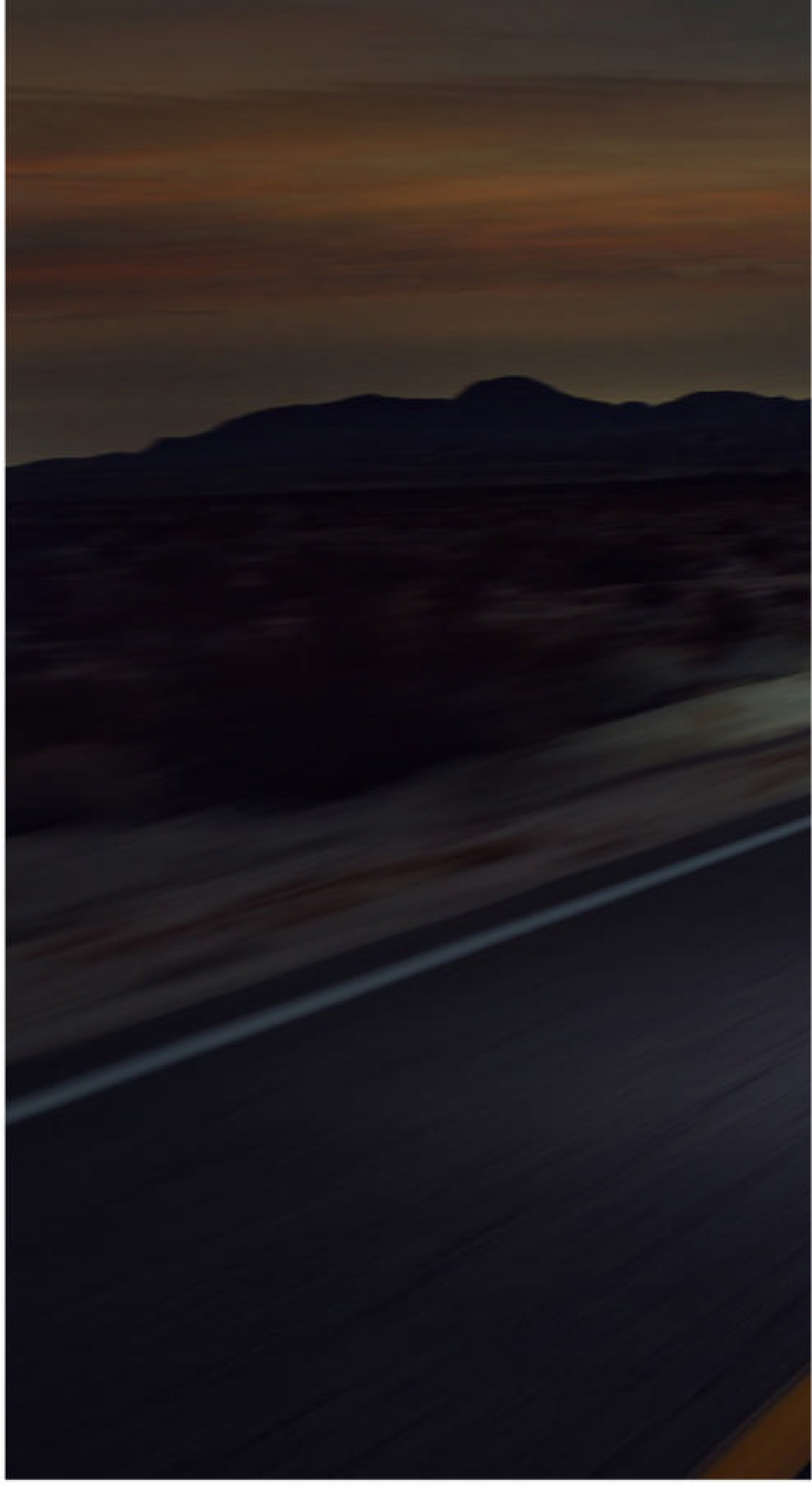
The results are stunning, if not electrifying. The Revuelto scorches the pavement to 60 mph in 2.2 seconds, 0.4 second quicker than the Aventador LP750-4 Superveloce, and the Revuelto leaves the line with all four tires scrambling for traction. The century mark comes in 4.6 seconds

Normally, a 9400-rpm V-12 is enough to blur the landscape, but Lamborghini took it even further and added three electric motors for a combined 1001 horses.

Highs: Ungodly acceleration, smooth-shifting gearbox, extraordinarily nimble. **Lows:** Transmission needs to warm up before switching from EV mode, button-operated turn signals. **Verdict:** This plug-in Lamborghini is the brand's best—and quickest—yet.

OPINION

COUNTERPOINTS



Numbers are important for any car, especially one that looks like the Revuelto, but what money really buys here is the experience. A Porsche Taycan Turbo GT is quicker to 60 mph, but while the Taycan might lead to blurred light and puke, it can't bend reality like the symphonic sound made by Lamborghini's naturally aspirated 6.5-liter V-12. Go watch the Revuelto's Lightning Lap video to hear it. It's an ensemble—drums, horns, voices, even some triangle. It's so moving that I basically forced Buyer's Guide director Rich Ceppos into taking it out to feel it accelerate to over 160 mph. A Lamborghini V-12 is a psychoactive experience. It changes you, rewires your brain, and alters consciousness. That's why it starts at $612,858. *—Tony Quiroga*

There I was in the Revuelto on Virginia International Raceway's Back Straight going, oh, an indicated 175 mph. Was I just successful in making that sound routine, no sweat? In reality, I was trying to get my brain to switch from "OMG!" to "Uh, where should I brake so I don't send this missile flying off the track into oblivion?" Boss man Quiroga, who has tested many a mega-horsepower machine, had returned from his lap, shaking his head. "Ceppos, you've gotta try this thing." When I rolled out of Oak Tree at 40 mph, I nailed it—and *whoo-ee*! About two-thirds down the straight, I braked back to reality with room to spare. Six hundred-some-odd grand? Worth every penny. *—Rich Ceppos*

Too much isn't possible. Ridiculous and overdone are compliments. Outrageous and unreasonable might be selling points in the brochure. The Revuelto is so fast that there's no straightaway long enough to click through all the gears. Supercars are becoming more easygoing, but not this Lamborghini. Designers buried the door handle so deep that you need a professional catfish noodler to find the release. The amount of buttons on the back of the steering wheel would prompt a dermatologist to schedule a biopsy. If you lean on the back end after a drive, you'll catch fire. When I took it to the grocery store, I came out to a handwritten note left on the windshield. "I love your car. I'm Italian!" I love it too. It's Italian! *—Elana Scherr*

Lamborghini
Lamborghini
V12

After the Aventador shuffled the historic Lamborghini V-12 firing order, the Revuelto engine returns to the classic: 1-7-4-10-2-8-6-12-3-9-5-11.

versus 5.8, and we're just getting started. The new Lambo hits 150 mph in 9.9 seconds, an improvement over the old car's 13.0, and crosses the quarter-mile in 9.7 seconds at 148 mph against 10.4 seconds at 136 mph for the Superveloce.

But that's just straight-line performance. The Revuelto positively murders corners, with an otherworldly ability to drive deep in toward the apex, without any hint of understeer. The benefit comes when the torque vectoring combines with rear-wheel steering to make the car seem to shrink around you. [For the Revuelto's on-track behavior, turn to its Lightning Lap entry on page 36.] The full 508 pound-feet of cross-axle torque vectoring (plus 254 pound-feet on one side, minus 254 pound-feet on the other) can come into play as needed, as one side essentially powers the other. This proves mighty impressive on the tight downhill sweepers in the Anza-Borrego Desert, where the car seems far more nimble than its 4290 pounds would suggest. Granted, much of the newfound weight is centered in the transmission tunnel, but the hellacious torque vectoring is doing major work here. In testing, the 265/35ZR-20 and 345/30ZR-21 Bridgestone Potenza Sport tires generate 1.10 g's of grip versus 1.04 g's for the Aventador SV, which lacked rear-wheel steering and any front-axle torque vectoring.

All of this comes with an entirely new suspension, which does away with the theater of the Aventador's pushrods and horizontally oriented dampers. Instead, the Revuelto's control-arm setup uses stand-up coil-overs and magnetorheological dampers in a more traditional layout. The new dampers do wonders for the ride, and we daresay it was rather pleasant in its Soft mode. Larger sidewalls that help cushion blows also contribute to the smooth ride. And because the engine is not always on, the Revuelto employs electric assist for the steering, and the engineers at Lamborghini nailed the tune.

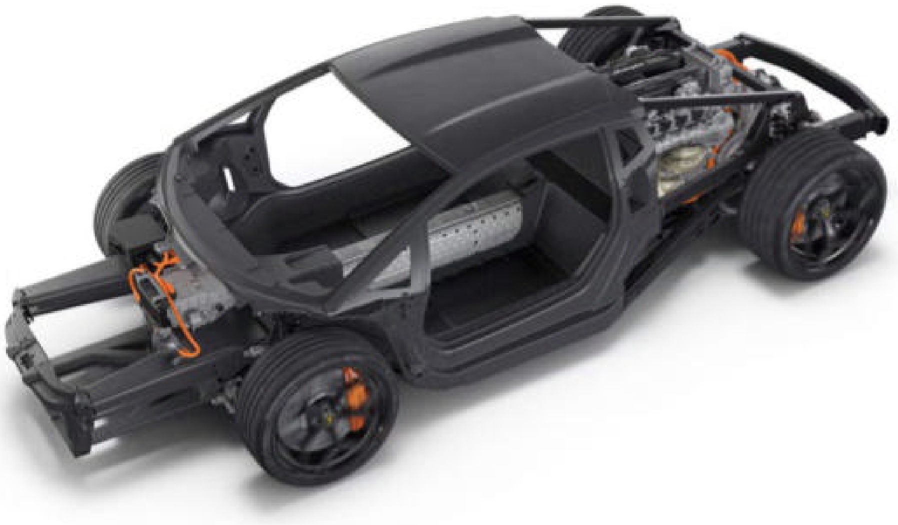
That's right, this is a plug-in hybrid. The EPA estimates the Revuelto delivers only five miles of battery-electric driving, so we almost forgot. And Lamborghini says it takes just six minutes for the engine to replenish it, so it hardly matters that the charge port is hidden from sight in the front trunk. (There is a special latch you can engage to

WHAT LIES BENEATH

HIGH-FIBER CAR

The Revuelto's inner strength.

Lamborghini builds the Revuelto around a "monofuselage," which increases the use of carbon fiber compared with the Aventador. Built on a separate line at the Sant'Agata Bolognese plant, this carbon-fiber tub comprises several types of material, depending on need and whether they are visible. The front subframe is entirely made up of forged carbon fiber, versus aluminum on the Aventador. Lamborghini says the Revuelto's front crash structure has double the strength of the Aventador's, and the entire monofuselage is 10 percent lighter, with 25 percent greater torsional stiffness. The engine carrier and rear suspension mounting points are aluminum, but the latter is largely made up of two hollow megacastings for reduced weight and increased strength.



The hexagon is still the interior polygon of choice in Sant'Agata Bolognese. Even the $3700 passenger's screen has six edges.

allow the hood to lock with it popped enough for the cord to exit.) This actually reminds us why the Revuelto uses axial motors: Their compactness leaves enough space for a front trunk capable of swallowing a carry-on suitcase (and then some), and they're better at regenerating electricity than the typical radial-flow AC motors.

In the mode called Città ("city" in Italian), the Revuelto stays calm and quiet as it moves under electric power with the engine off. The engine remains asleep until the transmission warms up, even if you select Strada, Sport, or Corsa mode. As you'd expect from an Italian V-12, it fires up dramatically before settling into a warm idle. Surprise neighbors by driving by them under electric power and then firing up the engine. You could motor around noiselessly in Città mode until the battery runs out, but why bother? It's just five miles.

A number of controls (including, annoyingly, the turn signals) are on the steering wheel, but unlike Ferrari, Lamborghini's controls are physical buttons or switches. There are four protruding knobs mounted around the horn pad, and some have buttons within them. On the upper left is the switch for the drive mode, and pressing its center button in Corsa engages launch control. The upper right controls the hybrid mode (Recharge, Hybrid, and, in some settings, Performance). The lower-left knob is for the dampers (Soft or Hard), and its button employs the all-important low-speed front-axle lift system. The knob on the lower right is for aero (Min, Auto, and Max). On the spokes between the knobs are turn-signal buttons on the left (yes, buttons—that's a sore point), and buttons for the wipers are on the right.

The mid-mounted 8.4-inch vertical central touchscreen can show HVAC, audio, or navigation. Other choices include optional wireless smartphone mirroring. What we didn't master until late in the game were the additional five-button arrays hidden on the back of the steering wheel, with the one on the left there to manipulate the left-hand display of the instrument cluster and the one on the right for managing the audio. Each array's center button nub is a bit hard to find at first, but once you find it, the rest is easy.

The views to the front and side are expansive, but the central mirror shows little more than an admittedly glorious view down the vee of the fully exposed engine. The steering wheel tilts and telescopes generously, and Lamborghini nailed the driving position, even for this six-foot-two writer. Huge fixed shift paddles protrude from the steering column, but they have ample coverage. You must remember to flick the right one to engage first gear, however, because the central shifter only has reverse, manual shifting, and park. The Revuelto comes with cupholders that swing out of the passenger's-side dashboard, and there's decent cargo space behind the seats. In fact, because the Revuelto has a 3.1-inch-longer wheelbase than the Aventador, is over three inches longer overall, and lacks that forward-mounted transmission, Lamborghini says there is space inside for a bag of golf clubs.

Golf clubs and cupholders in a Lamborghini? We told you this car was revolutionary.

Options in the photo above include $5500 Triguero matte-black wheels, Nero Lucido calipers for $1800, and titanium wheel bolts for $1800.

2024 Lamborghini Revuelto

PRICE

As Tested	$729,458
Base	$612,858

Options: upper exterior in shiny carbon, $23,700; lower exterior in shiny carbon, $22,400; Verde Citrea paint, $13,100; carbon interior details, $8000; steering-wheel carbon package, $8000; sport seats, $7600; Triguero matte-black wheels, $5500; aerodynamic door fin in shiny carbon, $3700; passenger's display, $3700; smartphone interface and connected services, $3400; Parking package, $3300; Lamborghini Connect vehicle tracking system, $2000; Nero Lucido brake calipers, $1800; titanium wheel bolts, $1800; unicolor leather and Corsa Tex interior with contrast stitching, $1800; auxiliary heater, $1200; matte-black tailpipes, $1200; Corsa Tex package for unicolor trim, $1100; embroidered Lamborghini shield on headrests, $1100; Travel package net, $1000; floor mats with leather piping, $600; matte-black rear Lamborghini logo, $600

Vehicle Type: mid-engine, front- and rear-motor, all-wheel-drive, 2-passenger, 2-door coupe

Infotainment: 8.4-inch touchscreen, 9.1-inch passenger's touchscreen; wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay; satellite radio (4 years included); 2 USB-C and Bluetooth inputs; 4 speakers

ENGINE

V-12, aluminum block and heads
Bore x Stroke .... 3.74 x 3.01 in, 95.0 x 76.4 mm
Displacement .... 397 in^3, 6498 cm^3
Compression Ratio 12.6:1
Fuel Delivery: port injection
Valve Gear: double overhead cams, 4 valves per cylinder, variable intake- and exhaust-valve timing
Redline/Fuel Cutoff .... 9400/9500 rpm
Power .... 814 hp @ 9250 rpm
Torque .... 535 lb-ft @ 6750 rpm

MOTORS

Front: 2 axial-flux permanent-magnet synchronous AC
Power .... 147 hp @ 3500 rpm
Torque .... 254 lb-ft @ 500 rpm
Rear: permanent-magnet synchronous AC
Power .... 147 hp @ 3500 rpm
Torque .... 110 lb-ft @ 1000 rpm

COMBINED OUTPUT

Power .... 1001 hp
Torque .... 1044 lb-ft

BATTERY PACK

liquid-cooled lithium-ion
Cell Count/Construction 108/pouch-type
Usable Capacity .... 3.4 kWh
Onboard Charger .... 7.2 kW

DRIVETRAIN

Transmissions, F/R: direct-drive/8-speed auto
Final-Drive Ratio 2.55:1
All-Wheel-Drive System: full time with automatic front-axle engagement

GEAR	RATIO	MPH PER 1000 RPM	MAX SPEED IN GEAR (rpm)
❶	5.23	6.5	62 mph (9500)
❷	3.87	8.8	84 mph (9500)
❸	2.96	11.5	109 mph (9500)
❹	2.19	15.5	147 mph (9500)
❺	1.84	18.5	176 mph (9500)
❻	1.56	21.8	207 mph (9500)
❼	1.38	24.7	217 mph (8775)
❽	1.02	33.4	217 mph (6500)

CHASSIS

carbon-fiber-reinforced-plastic center section and front subframe; aluminum rear subframe
Body Material: aluminum stampings and carbon-fiber-reinforced plastic

STEERING

rack-and-pinion with variable electric power assist, rear-wheel steering
Ratio 15.0:1
Turns Lock-to-Lock 2.6
Turning Circle Curb-to-Curb .... 38.4 ft

SUSPENSION

F: ind; control arms; coil springs; 2-position electronically controlled dampers; anti-roll bar
R: ind; control arms with an active toe-control link; coil springs; 2-position electronically controlled dampers; anti-roll bar

BRAKES

F: 16.1 x 1.5-in vented, cross-drilled carbon-ceramic disc, 10-piston fixed caliper
R: 15.4 x 1.3-in vented, cross-drilled carbon-ceramic disc, 4-piston fixed caliper
Stability Control: fully defeatable, traction off, competition mode, launch control

WHEELS AND TIRES

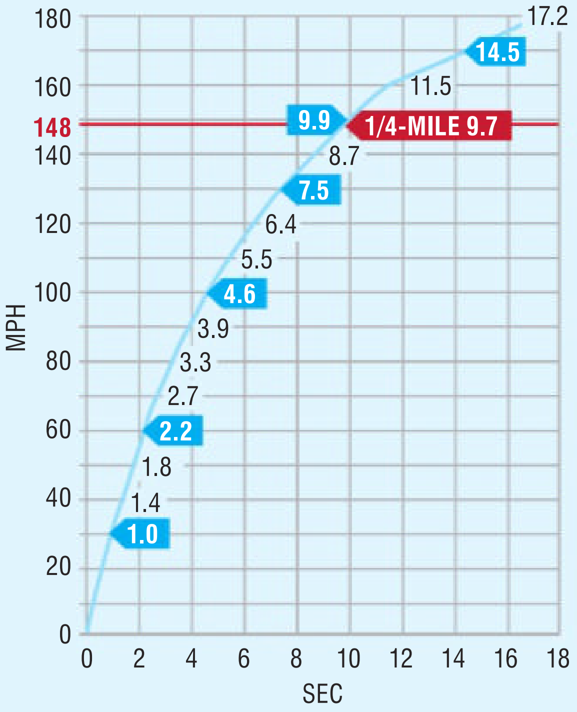
Wheels: forged aluminum
F: 9.5 x 20 in **R:** 12.0 x 21 in
Tires: Bridgestone Potenza Sport
F: 265/35ZR-20 (99Y) L **R:** 345/30ZR-21 (111Y) L

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase .... 109.4 in
Length .... 194.8 in
Width .... 80.0 in
Height .... 45.7 in
Front Track .... 67.7 in
Rear Track .... 67.0 in
Ground Clearance .... 4.5 in
Passenger Volume .... 50 ft^3
Front Trunk Volume .... 4 ft^3

TEST RESULTS

Acceleration



Results in graph omit 1-ft rollout of 0.2 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph .... 2.8 sec
Top Gear, 30–50 mph .... 2.0 sec
Top Gear, 50–70 mph .... 3.1 sec
Top Speed (mfr claim) .... 217 mph

Handling

Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad .... 1.10 g
Understeer: minimal

Braking

70–0 mph .... 154 ft
100–0 mph .... 290 ft
Fade: none

Weight

Curb .... 4290 lb
Per Horsepower .... 4.3 lb
Distribution, F/R 43.7/56.3%

Fuel

Capacity .... 18.0 gal
Octane 93

C/D Fuel Economy

Observed .... 13 mpg

EPA Fuel Economy

Comb/City/Hwy .... 12/10/17 mpg
Comb, Gas + Electricity .... 23 MPGe
EV Range .... 5 mi

Interior Sound Level

Idle .... 56 dBA
Full Throttle .... 93 dBA
70-mph Cruising .... 74 dBA

Tested by Dan Edmunds in California City, CA

COMPETITORS

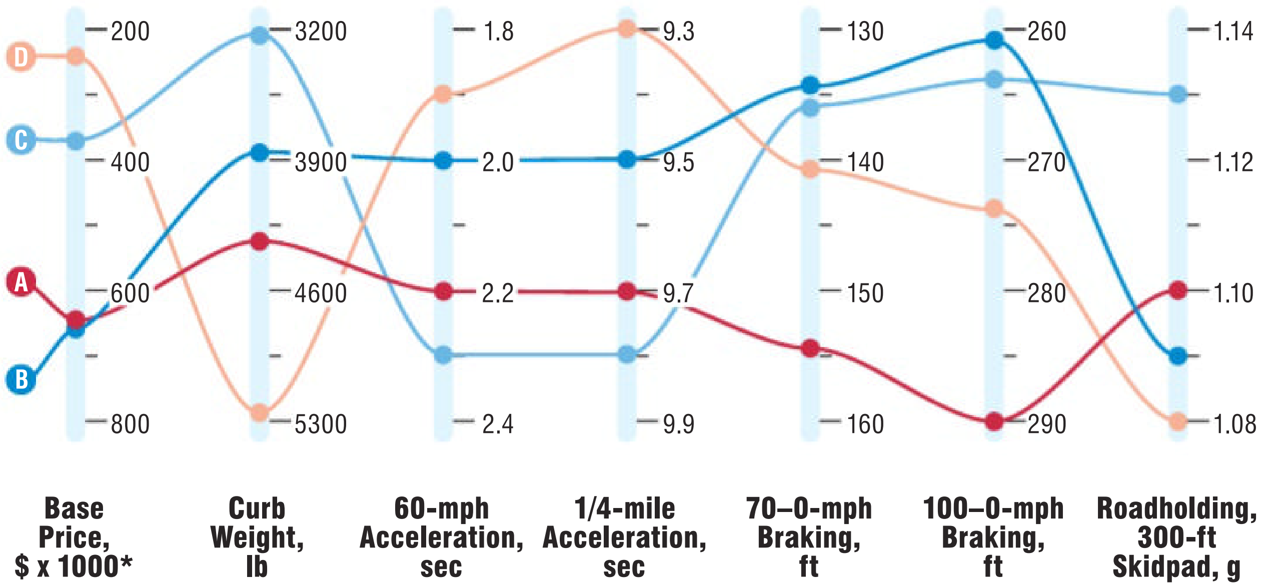
A roundup of some of the quickest things we've tested.

Ⓐ Lamborghini Revuelto
6.5-L V-12 + motors, 1001 hp; direct-drive/8-sp auto

Ⓑ Ferrari SF90 Stradale
4.0-L V-8 + motors, 986 hp; direct-drive/8-sp auto

Ⓒ McLaren 750S
740-hp 4.0-L V-8; 7-sp auto

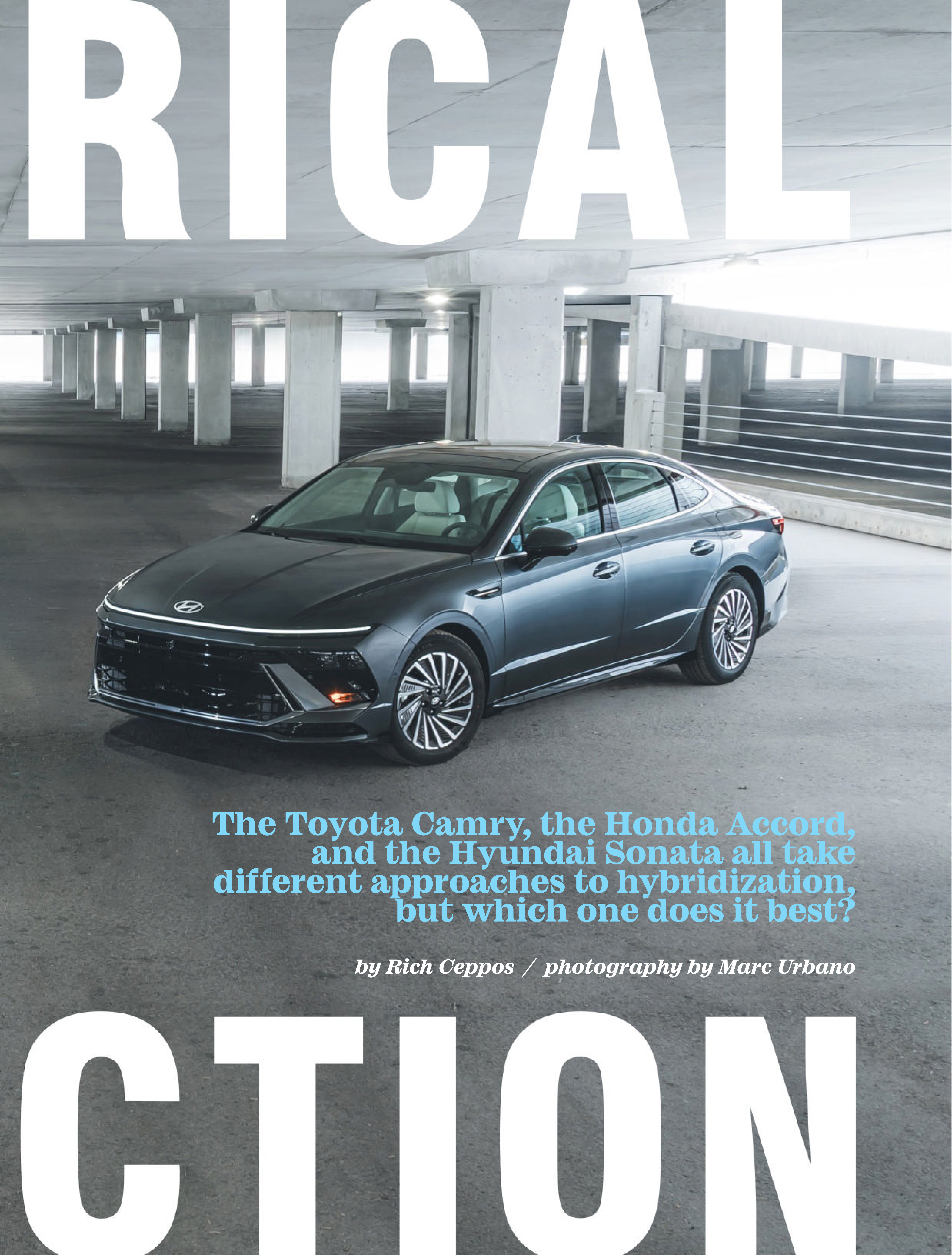
Ⓓ Porsche Taycan Turbo GT
2 AC motors, 1019 hp; direct-drive/2-sp auto



*Includes performance-enhancing options.

ELECT CONNE

RICAL



The Toyota Camry, the Honda Accord, and the Hyundai Sonata all take different approaches to hybridization, but which one does it best?

by Rich Ceppos / photography by Marc Urbano

CTION

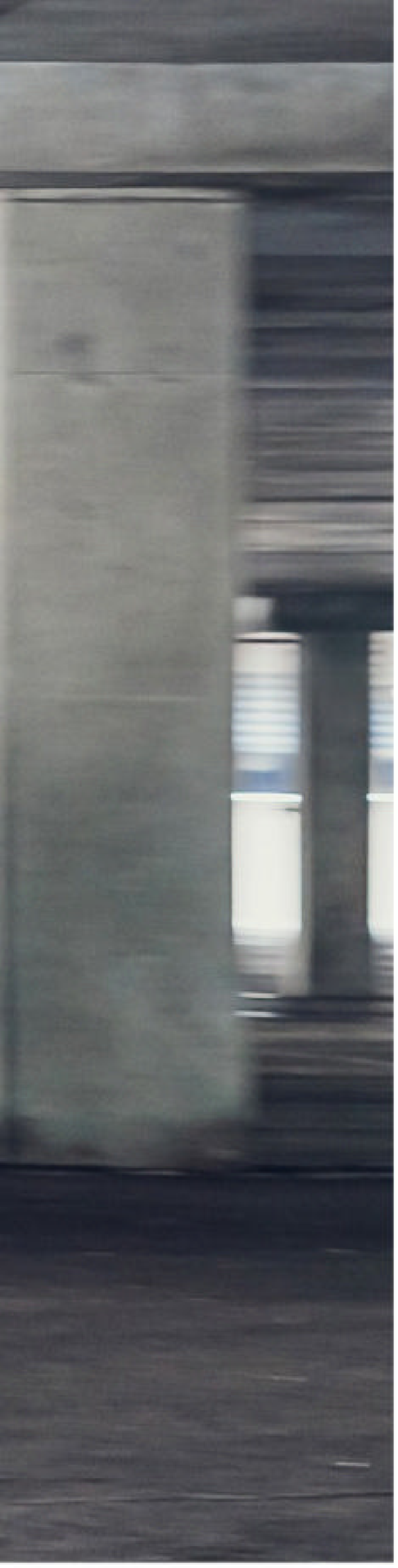
Here's one trend the automotive prognosticators didn't see coming: the humble hybrid's comeback.

In 2024, sales of conventional hybrids—the ones you don't plug in—shot up nearly 37 percent from 2023, according to the automotive analysis firm Wards Intelligence, while sales of electric vehicles rose just 7 percent. Proof that hybrids have become so well understood, so well accepted, and so commonplace is that all 2025 Toyota Camrys are hybrids, and the top four of the Honda Accord's six trims went hybrid-only in 2023. When popular mainstream family cars like these—the Camry was the eighth-bestselling vehicle in the U.S. in 2024—have gas-electric propulsion as standard, you know hybrids have become the new normal.

To see what upsides—and downsides—exist in the realm of hybrid-only sedans, we paired an all-wheel-drive Camry XLE and an Accord Touring for a comparison deep dive. We also invited the recently refreshed Hyundai Sonata Limited Hybrid, a natural competitor of the Camry and the Accord. Curiously, each of these family sedans employs a different type of hybrid system. Which car provides the best performance, the highest efficiency, and the most fun from behind the wheel?

To suss out our trio's fuel efficiency and driving personalities, we journeyed from our Ann Arbor offices to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, a round trip of 600 miles. Why Indy as our terminus? Race cars that compete at the Brickyard are increasingly adopting hybrid systems (Indy cars and IMSA prototypes are hybrids),

Toyota Camry XLE AWD
Highs: **Pleasingly peppy powertrain, appropriately parsimonious with fuel, well-honed ride.**
Lows: **Boomy engine note, CVT's syrupy responses, the washcloth material on the dash and doors.**
Verdict: **The Camry succeeds at making standard hybrid power a nonissue.**



Honda Accord Touring
Highs: Sports-sedan moves, luxury-car powertrain refinement, rear legroom for days. Lows: Low-key on the outside, low-key on the inside, lacks satellite radio. Verdict: A family sedan that drives sweetly enough to please discerning enthusiasts.

and the connection to our family sedans gave our Walter Mitty fantasies a boost.

As to our street-drivable hybrid trio, we gathered loaded models from each brand. The Accord Touring and the Sonata Limited are top-spec versions in their lineups. The Camry XLE is one small step down from the slightly sportier XSE, and the XLE's smaller wheels and tires net better EPA ratings. As tested, the three cars are close in pricing and equipment. The Honda's $40,905 sticker showed but one option, Radiant Red metallic paint ($455), while carpeted floor mats ($210) were the only extra on the $39,005 Hyundai. The $42,577 Toyota, which starts at $36,360, was optioned up to a similar equipment level with the Premium Plus package ($4760); it also added several items the others didn't have and that we wouldn't want, including a dash cam and paint protection on the rear bumper and doorsills, a combo that

Hyundai Sonata Limited Hybrid
Highs: Modernistic styling, sharp widescreen infotainment display, big-time value. Lows: Conventional transmission hinders performance, uninvolving handling, would rather trot than sprint. Verdict: The hybrid that operates most like a conventional gas car, for better and for worse.

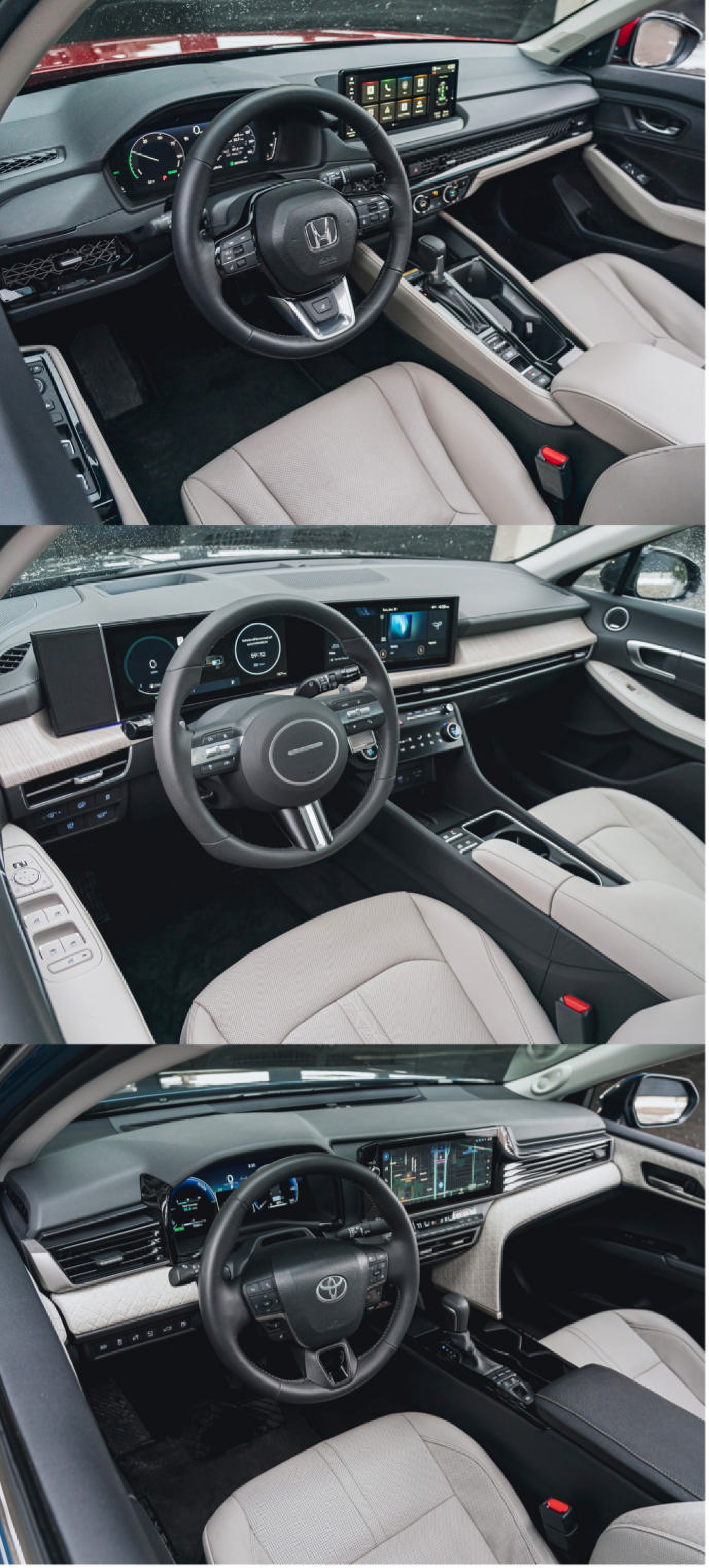
raised the price by roughly $1500. And while the Honda and the Hyundai are front-wheel drive, the Camry offers an all-wheel-drive option for $1525. The system adds a motor to the rear wheels, netting seven more horsepower while dropping the EPA combined figure by 1 mpg on our test trim.

Fuel economy being a focus, we spent the first day of our drive on a mix of roads: a morning slog on a loop through city and suburban streets near our office; a midday, two-lane run from Toledo, Ohio, south along the Maumee River to Defiance, Ohio; and finally, an interstate sprint to Indianapolis and back. And, of course, we subjected the cars to our thorough instrumented testing regimen, including our 200-mile, 75-mph highway fuel-economy test. The deep soak revealed plenty about this intriguing trio.

EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR

One thing the Accord, Sonata, and Camry hybrids show us is that hybrids are now mainstream: Beyond a few small badges, these three make no effort to call attention to their gas-electric powertrains. To our eyes, they're all modern variations on the classic three-box sedan shape. The Accord's styling is the most restrained, and the Sonata's is the most modern and edgy, with a droopy nose and a thin light bar spanning the front end. The new-for-2025 Camry could be mistaken for the previous-generation car, which apparently looked good enough to attract 217,859 buyers to the 2024 model.

Inside, each vehicle offers a slightly different vibe, though all three are roomy, comfortable, dressed in good-quality materials, and fully equipped with everything from heated steering wheels to heated and ventilated front seats to upscale audio systems. We were happy to find plenty of real buttons and knobs for things such as climate control and audio adjustments in all three cars. Our trio also featured reasonably easy-to-navigate 12.3-inch infotainment screens, though both the Sonata's and the Camry's were more convenient to use while driving than the Accord's. The Honda is also the only one that does not offer the option of satellite radio. We did note one aesthetic miscue in the



Honda's presentation (top) is straightforward but lacks satellite radio. Hyundai (center) merges its two screens and has a stubby stalk shifter. Toyota's new dash (bottom) is less weird than before.

Please be seated: The Accord (top) has the most rear-seat legroom, but the cabin's design didn't wow us. The Sonata (center) is feature filled. We questioned whether some of the Camry's materials (bottom) befit a near-top-spec model.

Camry's interior, which is the fabric trim lining the dash and door panels—it reminds us of a cheap washcloth.

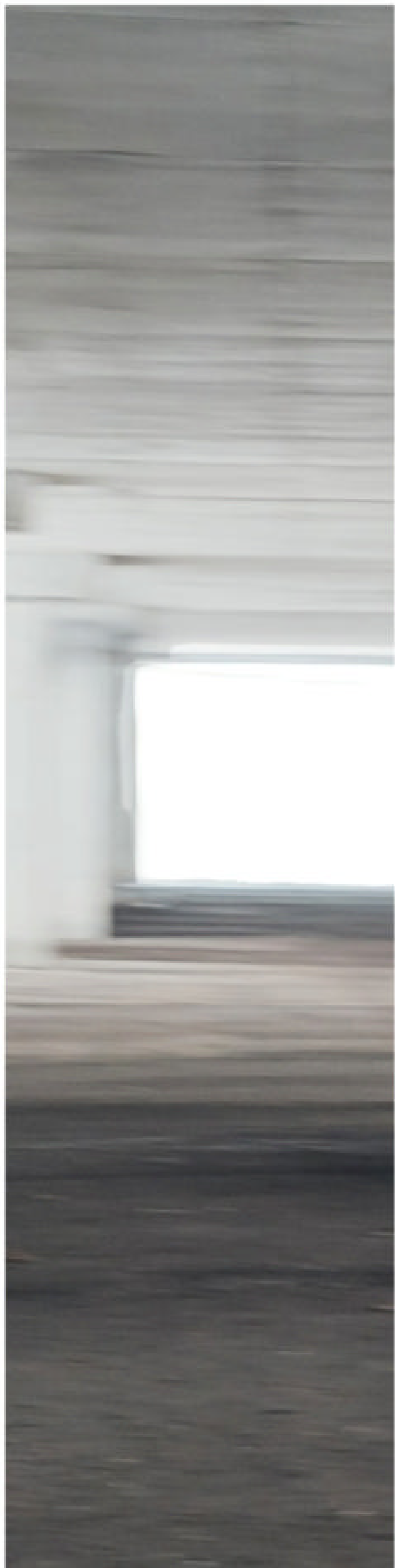
Since these are family sedans, roominess is especially important, and here, the Accord pulls ahead of its rivals in one key metric. While the Sonata and the Camry are spacious enough for a pair of six-footers to sit comfortably front and rear, the Accord's rear-seat legroom is positively voluminous, giving its cabin a clear advantage in practicality. When we stuffed three staffers in the back, however, we noticed that the Accord's sloping roofline impeded headroom for the outboard two passengers in particular.

	2025 Honda Accord Touring	**2025 Hyundai Sonata Limited Hybrid**	**2025 Toyota Camry XLE AWD**
Base/As Tested	$40,450/$40,905	$38,795/**$39,005**	**$36,360**/$42,577
Dimensions			
Wheelbase	111.4 in	111.8 in	111.2 in
Length/Width/Height	195.7/73.3/57.1 in	193.3/73.2/56.9 in	193.5/72.4/56.9 in
Track, F/R	62.6/63.5 in	63.9/64.2 in	62.2/62.8 in
Passenger Volume, F/R	53/**50 ft**^{3}	**59**/42 ft^3	53/46 ft^3
Trunk Volume	**17 ft**^{3}	16 ft^3	15 ft^3

POWERTRAIN AND PERFORMANCE

All three sedans use an Atkinson-cycle four-cylinder gas engine—2.0 liters in the Accord and the Sonata, 2.5 liters in the Camry—along with a small-capacity lithium-ion battery pack. From there, the strategies diverge. The 204-hp system in the Honda uses its engine to spin a generator that sends power to either the battery or a traction motor coupled to the front wheels; the engine can also power the front wheels directly when conditions are right. The Camry's 232-hp setup combines a traction motor and a supplementary electric motor to apportion gas and electric power through a planetary gearset to the front wheels, and this all-wheel-drive version adds a 40-hp rear-axle motor. The Sonata's 192-hp system has a motor-generator stuffed between the engine and a conventional six-speed automatic transmission. All three cars employ regenerative braking, adjustable in the Accord and the Sonata via steering-wheel paddles.

In our objective tests, no one car asserted dominance. In this segment's all-important category of fuel economy, the differences are paper thin: Over our 600-mile drive, the Sonata delivered 37 mpg, the Camry 36 mpg, and the Accord 35 mpg. Those numbers are well below each car's EPA figures for combined driving, a result we attribute to our heavy-footed driving style and the frigid winter temperatures the test



All three of these sedans are four-cylinder hybrids, but each goes about hybridization very differently.

	2025 Honda Accord Touring	2025 Hyundai Sonata Limited Hybrid	2025 Toyota Camry XLE AWD
Powertrain			
Hybrid System	DOHC 16-valve Atkinson-cycle 2.0-liter inline-4, 146 hp, 134 lb-ft + 2 AC motors; 1.1-kWh lithium-ion battery pack	DOHC 16-valve Atkinson-cycle 2.0-liter inline-4, 150 hp, 139 lb-ft + AC motor; 0.8-kWh lithium-ion battery pack (*C/D* est)	DOHC 16-valve Atkinson-cycle 2.5-liter inline-4, 184 hp, 163 lb-ft + 3 AC motors; 0.6-kWh lithium-ion battery pack (*C/D* est)
Transmission(s)	direct-drive	6-speed automatic	**F:** CVT **R:** direct-drive
Driven Wheels	front	front	all
Combined Power, hp	204	192	**232**
lb per hp	17.2	18.4	**16.1**
Chassis			
Suspension	**F:** struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **R:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	**F:** struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **R:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar	**F:** struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **R:** multilink, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Brakes	**F:** 12.3-in vented disc **R:** 11.1-in disc	**F:** 12.0-in vented disc **R:** 11.2-in disc	**F:** 12.0-in vented disc **R:** 11.1-in disc
Stability Control	partially defeatable	partially defeatable, traction off	partially defeatable, traction off
Tires	Michelin Primacy MXM4 235/40R-19 96V M+S DT1	Kuhmo Solus TA31+ 215/55R-17 94V M+S	Hankook Kinergy GT 235/45R-18 94V M+S

vehicles endured. On our 75-mph highway fuel-economy test, the Sonata and the Camry both notched 39-mpg results, while the Accord came in at 36 mpg.

From there, determining which car has the best performance becomes murkier. The Accord's 6.7-second 60-mph time is quickest, with the Camry at 6.9 seconds and the Sonata at 7.7. At the quarter-mile mark, the three are neck and neck, but the Camry begins to pull away. It is 2.6 seconds quicker than the Sonata and beats the Accord by 3.1 seconds to 100 mph, a speed that will probably be anathema to most hybrid jockeys. The Accord takes the win in sprints from 30 to 50 and 50 to 70 mph, and the Camry is a few tenths quicker than the others from 5 to 60 mph. Braking from 70 mph has all three within seven feet of one another. The Accord posts a strong 0.89-g skidpad result, with the other two tied at 0.85 g. Based solely on the objective results, it's tough to pick a winner.

CURIOSITIES

POWER PLAY

While counting USB ports and cupholders as part of this comparison test, we thought we had killed the Sonata's 12-volt battery when all electronic accessories stopped working. After some research, we discovered the vehicle's "12V batt reset" button on the lower left portion of the instrument panel. To prevent its lithium-ion 12-volt battery from an accidental over-discharge, the Sonata disconnects the 12-volt system if it senses a drop in voltage beyond a certain point. The reset button reconnects the 12-volt battery for 30 seconds, allowing you to start the car or put it in Ready mode to replenish it with the hybrid powertrain's traction battery. Alternatively, the trunk release can act as the reset button, should you find yourself in a similar situation with the fob locked inside. —*Austin Irwin*

SONATA
9PEY746

TEST RESULTS	2025 Honda Accord Touring	2025 Hyundai Sonata Limited Hybrid	2025 Toyota Camry XLE AWD
Acceleration			
30 mph	2.6 sec	2.7 sec	**2.3 sec**
60 mph	**6.7 sec**	7.7 sec	6.9 sec
100 mph	20.5 sec	20.0 sec	**17.4 sec**
1/4-Mile @ mph	15.3 sec @ 90	15.8 sec @ 90	**15.2 sec** @ **93**
	Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.	*Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.4 sec.*	*Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.*
Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	7.7 sec	8.2 sec	**7.4 sec**
Top Gear, 30–50 mph	**3.5 sec**	4.4 sec	3.9 sec
Top Gear, 50–70 mph	**4.8 sec**	4.9 sec	5.0 sec
Top Speed	**125 mph** (gov ltd)	124 mph (gov ltd)	115 mph (gov ltd)
Chassis			
Braking, 70–0 mph	**165 ft**	172 ft	170 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	**0.89 g**	0.85 g	0.85 g
Weight			
Curb	**3507 lb**	3535 lb	3746 lb
Distribution, F/R	61.2/38.8%	60.9/39.1%	56.1/43.9%
Fuel			
Capacity/Octane	12.8 gal/87	**13.2 gal**/87	13.0 gal/87
EPA Comb/City/Hwy	44/**46**/41 mpg	**47**/44/**51 mpg**	46/**46**/46 mpg
C/D 600-mi Trip	35 mpg	**37 mpg**	36 mpg
75-mph Hwy Driving	36 mpg	**39 mpg**	**39 mpg**
75-mph Hwy Range	460 mi	**510 mi**	500 mi
Sound Level			
Idle/Full Throttle	31/72 dBA	35/74 dBA	**29/70 dBA**
70-mph Cruise	68 dBA	**67 dBA**	**67 dBA**

Tested by David Beard and Dave VanderWerp in Chelsea, MI

DRIVING EXPERIENCE

While the performance of these hybrids is similar, their personalities are not. All were comfortable cruisers on the highway, but once we started threading our way along the two-lane bordering the frozen Maumee, the Accord reminded us why it's a 10Best winner. It's a sports sedan trapped in a hybrid family car's body, manifesting that elusive nth degree of athletic coordination that discerning drivers will immediately sense. Its ride and handling balance is just right, its steering feel and effort spot-on. The Accord manages to be light on its feet yet playful and dedicated in the bends. What's more, its powertrain refinement stands head and shoulders above the other two cars'. Its four-cylinder whispers distantly as the revs rise and fall between the barely noticeable faux shifts programmed into its hybrid system. As with the Camry, the instant torque supplied by the electric motors enables crisp response even to small accelerator inputs, making the Accord feel peppier than it is. We could nitpick its ride—it clip-clops across expansion joints the Camry glosses over—but our backsides quickly adjusted to that minor difference. There's joy to be had here.

To be sure, both the Camry and the Sonata delivered a driving experience that will offend no one. The Camry has closed the gap between itself and the Accord dynamically, but it still doesn't quite possess the deft and effortless handling that wows us in the Honda. There's far more engine presence in the Camry's cabin too, exacerbated by its transmission, which slurs engine rpm up and down noisily with every press of the right pedal. Still, there's a lot to like here; it's a well-rounded and highly capable family sedan.

When saving money on gasoline lets you spend more at Costco, the Honda (left) carries home the biggest haul, followed by the Hyundai (center) and, lastly, the Toyota (right).

As is the Sonata. It's the softy of the group, with a ride that sometimes had a touch of float coupled with relaxed handling responses. "Relaxed" also describes the drivetrain, which was the least inclined to deliver energetic acceleration unless you pin the gas for a long time. Part of this is down to its conventional automatic transmission, which felt programmed to upshift to higher gears early, as expected of a car aimed at max fuel economy. All of this made the Sonata feel the most like a conventional gas-only sedan.

AND THE WINNER IS . . .

All three of the hybrid family sedans in this test are parsimonious with gasoline and offer solid value. But we love driving, and we favor vehicles that not only fulfill their core mission but also deliver an extra measure of enjoyment and involvement behind the wheel. That's why the Honda Accord Touring is the hybrid sedan we would most want in the *Car and Driver* family's garage. You're not surprised. Come to think of it, neither are we.

The hybrid-powered Accord moves with the grace of, well, an Accord.

Final Results

	VEHICLE												POWERTRAIN						CHASSIS						EXPERIENCE	
	DRIVER COMFORT	ERGONOMICS	REAR-SEAT COMFORT	REAR-SEAT SPACE*	CARGO SPACE*	FEATURES/AMENITIES*	FIT AND FINISH	INTERIOR STYLING	EXTERIOR STYLING	REBATES/EXTRAS*	AS-TESTED PRICE*	SUBTOTAL	1/4-MILE ACCELERATION*	FLEXIBILITY*	FUEL ECONOMY*	ENGINE NVH	TRANSMISSION	SUBTOTAL	PERFORMANCE*	STEERING FEEL	BRAKE FEEL	HANDLING	RIDE	SUBTOTAL	FUN TO DRIVE	GRAND TOTAL
Maximum points available	10	10	5	5	5	10	10	10	10	5	20	100	20	5	10	10	10	55	20	10	10	10	10	60	25	240
1. Honda Accord	8	8	4	5	5	7	8	7	7	0	19	78	20	3	8	9	9	49	20	10	9	10	8	57	23	207
2. Toyota Camry	7	8	4	4	4	9	8	8	7	1	18	78	20	4	9	6	7	46	19	8	8	8	8	51	19	194
3. Hyundai Sonata	9	9	3	2	5	10	8	7	8	0	20	81	17	4	10	7	7	45	18	7	7	6	8	46	17	189

These objective scores are calculated from the vehicles' dimensions, capacities, rebates and extras, and/or test results.

TELEPHONE
POST OFFICE

AN AMERICAN TOURING SCOTLAND

IN AN ENGLISH CAR BUILT IN CHINA

by Jamie Kitman / photography by Charlie Magee

YOU'D THINK THE SIGHT of a new MG might attract more attention, whether it was spied carving up the winding roads of rural Scotland or whizzing down the back streets of the country's capital city, Edinburgh. Once one of the United Kingdom's most successful exports and synonymous with sports car, an MG would turn the heads of every small-town Scot and even a few sheep. As we passed through quaint burghs large and small in our MG4 EV Trophy Extended Range, hardly anyone looked up.

Modern MGs are not the Morris Garages cars of old. The Chinese state-owned carmaker Nanjing Automobile purchased the storied brand in 2005 before merging with current owner SAIC Motor (also state controlled) in 2007. Made in China, MGs are now commonplace in Europe, having racked up substantial sales across the Continent and throughout the British Isles. This inexpensive electric SUV is one that strikes terror in the hearts of Western automakers and legislators. But the Scots we drove past were nonplussed.

While the modern MG lacks the romance and emotional appeal of its forebears, our experience driving more than 1500 miles in this electric version suggests that when it comes to affordable and reliable transportation, competing carmakers' worries about Chinese EVs are well founded. This MG4 is not a beauty or even a cutie. Its design is overwrought yet somehow boring in the modern compact-SUV vein, and its interior fittings hark back to another era in their utter iffiness. But for the price, it's startlingly all right.

So all right that the MG4 was the fourth-bestselling electric vehicle in the U.K. in 2024. The familiar MG badge also helped in Europe as a whole, where the model established a best-ever monthly sales mark in June 2024 with nearly 10,000 units, ranking third among EVs. The European Union, however, has levied new tariffs on Chinese EVs—as high as 45 percent—and MG4 sales have since fallen. The U.K., though, is no longer in the EU and for now does not appear inclined to adopt the EU's tariffs.

The Scots pride themselves on thrift, so MG4 EVs were there for the counting during our brief stay in Edinburgh, where construction detours sent us on an exploration of one-way streets, ancient underpasses, and improbable cut-throughs. The MG's infotainment system did little to assist, its two screens—one small and one really small—offering minimal accurate direction through the tangles of the city's Old Town. The central screen displays a camera view of what's in your side mirror when you signal a turn and takes far too long to revert to the navigation program afterward, which often left us clueless about what to do next.

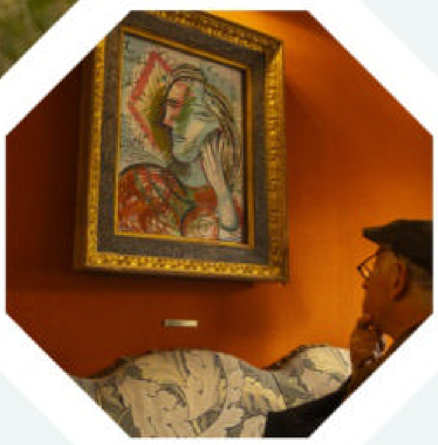
The MG Pilot driver-assist system, particularly its lane-keeping function, disappointed time and again. It takes over quite aggressively should it think the car is leaving its intended lane, even if the MG4 is going where you mean it to. And we had to reprogram many of our preferred settings every time we started the car. One-pedal driving is on the menu but cumbersomely accessed via the touchscreen.

From Edinburgh, we headed for the Queensferry Crossing. After that, a northeasterly route

In Dornbach, Scotland, Kitman walks past a modern MG and a Morris Minor, its distant relative. From left: Motoring through the Scottish Highlands; lobster traps in Dunbeath; taking on electrons at Gridserve; traversing the North Sea coast.

SHEEP on ROAD

G. SMITH LTD
Glenlivet Distillery
1605
1962
40.6
G. & J. G.



Plotting a route as the MG charges; a hand-painted caution; admiring a Picasso at the Fife Arms hotel in Braemar; pausing at the Glenlivet distillery.

through the Highlands gave us 90 miles of elevated, spellbinding nothingness, beginning in Blairgowrie near a winter ski resort that during our visit hosted wool sweaters only in their natural form, grazing on the green hills.

Some might question the wisdom of taking an electric vehicle to a sparsely populated corner of a small country like Scotland. If ever there were a place where quality charging infrastructure figured to come up short, the Scottish Highlands—wet, wild, remote, and chilly—seemed it.

But we lucked out.

We ran into run-of-the-mill annoyances like broken charging stations and humble locations—grimy, with no bathrooms and slow Level 2 units only. To such traditional plaints, add persistent issues with local apps and charging networks unable to serve American visitors who want to purchase electrons. (One network's customer-service rep helpfully suggested we switch all our U.S.-based phone's settings to U.K. ones and delete our other apps to use theirs. Uh, no.)

Wherever you travel, the business of charging away from home potentially involves a mystifying multiplicity of providers and pricing, ranging from pretty cheap to really bleeping expensive. But even at its worst, charging in the U.K. was never as costly as filling up with unleaded, with fees ranging from $23 to $62 for our charges. And the availability of 50-plus-kW chargers was good. We saw 150-kW units often and even 350-kW hookups, but both were more than this MG, good for up to 144 kilowatts, could handle.

A 74.4-kWh battery pack and a 241-hp motor powered our rear-wheel-drive MG4 Trophy Extended Range, which has an estimated 323 miles of range (based on the very optimistic WLTP standard). In our experience, something like 240 miles is a more realistic figure at highway speeds.

After we got a full charge, our next section of travel took us past famous distilleries and even more famous castles. The following evening, we decamped at Dornoch Station, a grand former railway hotel boasting 89 rooms and exceptional proximity to the 13th-century Dornoch Firth Church of Scotland and the Royal Dornoch Golf Club, site of a championship course established in 1877 and, for many a duffer, a Mecca-like place of great religiosity. Invented in Scotland in the late Middle Ages, golf, we were amused to learn, was so popular at first that the Scottish Parliament of King James II outright banned it in 1457 on the grounds that it was causing soldiers to neglect their training.

Heading north along the coastal road, we approached Dunbeath, our final stop in the coun-

Ancient golf clubs like those that might have distracted soldiers; under a viaduct in Cullen; the manicured and long-standing gardens outside Dunrobin Castle; a drone's-eye view of Scotland's coastal northeast.

try, about 40 miles to the south of Dunnet Head, mainland Scotland's northernmost point. Having left what the tourist board calls the North East 250, we'd joined the Coastal 500, a popular route for drivers. Wonderful winding roads overlook the sea over one shoulder and vast tracts of empty, largely undeveloped land rest over the other, with fields of heather and low forest and plentiful deer to keep the farm animals company.

After a two-day stay in Dunbeath, a roughly 700-mile return journey took us to London via Manchester. The final leg gave us plenty of time to reflect on electric-car travel generally and the MG4 specifically. Charging stations were conspicuously more plentiful at the U.K.'s motorway rest stops than they are along U.S. interstates. Even in Scotland's rural landscape, this trip was possible to do by electric car. ChargePlace Scotland, the national EV charging network, claims more than 2600 charge points. Zapmap offers a helpful guide to Scottish stations' availability and their finer functional points, as does Carwow. We never experienced crippling delays, though patience, as it does in all things, helped.

As for the MG4, the car is as important for what it represents as for what it is. It's quick enough (our model has a claimed 60-mph time of 60 of 6.1 seconds; other versions can take up to 7.7) and it stops and handles well, with pleasant steering and hints of fun-to-drive playfulness. Our Trophy Extended Range, able to go from 10 to 80 percent charge in a claimed 39 minutes, cost about $45,000 (at current exchange rates), which might not sound cheap but is still thousands less than many competitors' prices. And a quick internet search suggests heavy discounts are widely available—over $11,000 off on average. Less expensive and slower MG4 models with less range begin well under $30,000, with entry-level models selling for closer to $27,000 (all of these prices do not include U.K.'s 20 percent sales tax). And for those in search of a Chinese hot hatch, a twin-motor MG4 XPower all-wheel-drive model puts 429 horsepower and 443 pound-feet of torque at your disposal, summoning 60 mph in a claimed 3.7 seconds. All MG4s benefit from a stated curb weight of less than 4000 pounds, which, sadly, is what counts for an extremely light weight among EVs.

The overall driving experience could be likened to a lower-quality Chevy Bolt—a bit more road noise, less solid, less refined, but with a tad more pizzazz. Seemingly, any piece of exterior plastic was fair game for fussy reimagination on the MG4. I'd grudgingly come to concede that it does show a modicum of individuality within its conformist category, conveying a certain nervous busy-bee energy, which in many ways is how you should view this car. It's trying hard.

The United States' 100 percent tariff on electric vehicles made in China will likely keep American shores free of new MGs for a while. Not that there was any real question going in, but the MG4 has nothing to do with the British MGs of yore in which America played such a large role, buying up the lion's share of what would become the quintessential British sports car. The name still has meaning in the U.K. As the brand continues to celebrate its 100th anniversary, it's also building a factory and an R&D center in Mexico, opening up the potential to export cars to the United States under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Meanwhile, we have determined that this Chinese electric with a British name is capable of transporting a crew of adventurers to the most remote parts of Scotland. Even if the sheep seem unimpressed.

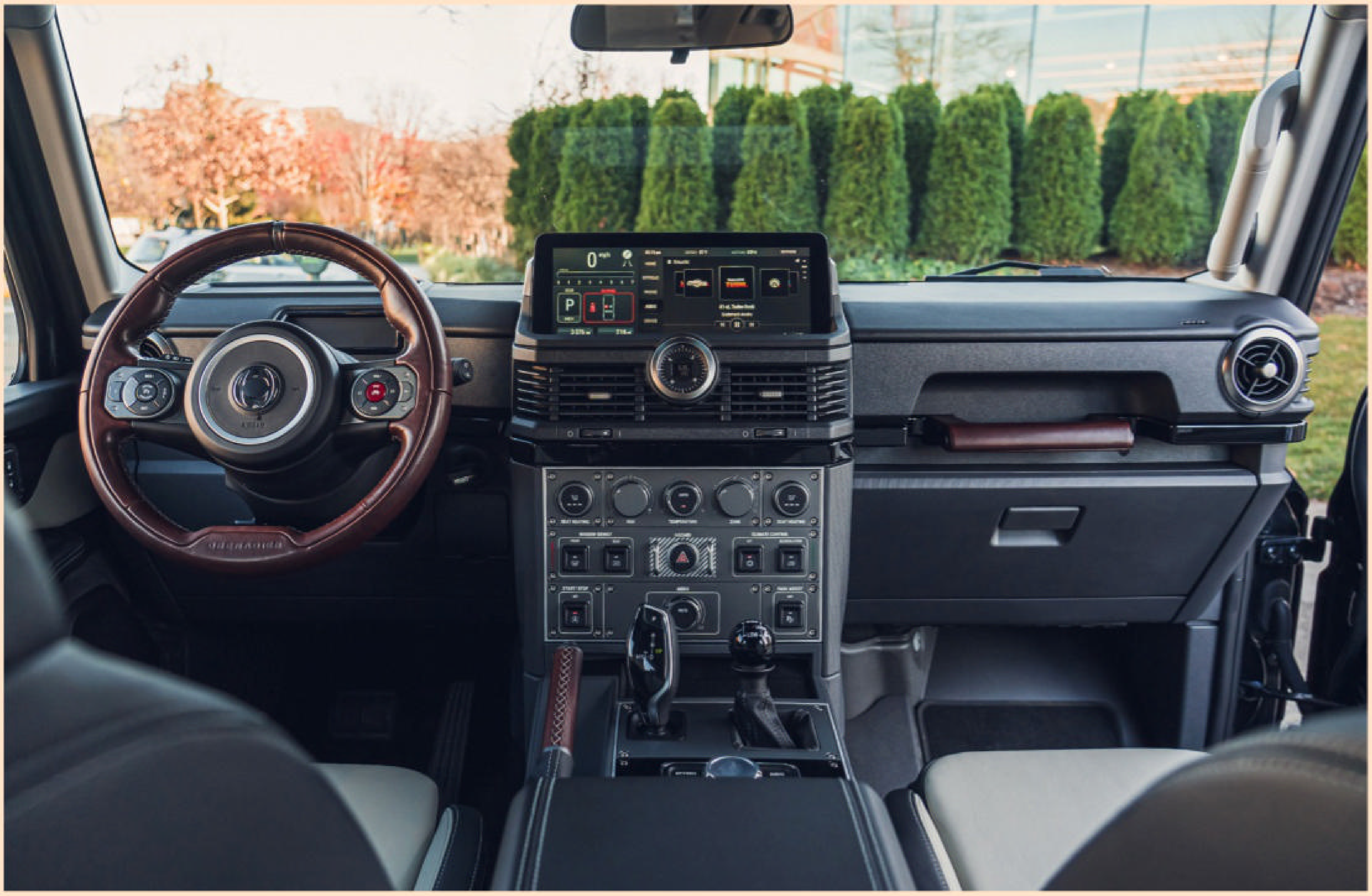
A DIGEST OF TESTS, UNFETTERED OPINIONS, AND SOME INTERESTING MINUTIAE

Drivelines

Spite Defender

Ineos Grenadier **HIGHS:** Dapper off-road style meets genuine off-road capability, wonderfully smooth powertrain, built like a brick outhouse.
LOWS: Incessant warnings, sloppy and slow steering, noisy on the highway.

WE ALL HAVE KNOCKED BACK a pint at the local bar while mulling how to build a better car than the one in our driveway. Daydreaming about perfecting cars is universal, but Jim Ratcliffe apparently takes it more seriously than most. He's the British billionaire who tried to buy the tooling for the Land Rover Defender (the old one, not the new one) so he could update it



The red button on the steering wheel is labeled "toot" but will not make the Grenadier flatulent. You're looking for the "pull my finger" button.

to meet modern regulations. When Land Rover passed, he did the costliest "Hold my beer" we've ever heard of and created the Ineos Grenadier.

It looks familiar. From some angles, the body-on-frame Ineos is all Defender 110 (again, the old one). From others, it screams G-wagen louder than an influencer upon being asked, "What's the first thing you're gonna buy with all of that YouTube money?" The Grenadier has a 115.0-inch wheelbase, five seats, and, in Fieldmaster trim, two standard safari windows that can vent open or be removed, should you want to eliminate the security that glass offers while you take in Serengeti wildlife. The base version of the Grenadier starts at $73,100, less than half the starting price of a Mercedes-Benz G550 and about 10 grand more than the least costly new Defender 110.

The exterior of the Fieldmaster trim we borrowed sports small graphics inspired by three flags: a Union Jack for obvious reasons, a German flag for the "engineering rigor" it claims to have, and a French flag for its assembly home in Hambach (depending on when your geography book was printed, that could be a French or a German city). Bolted between the front fenders, which will support a standing adult, is a BMW 3.0-liter inline-six connected to a ZF eight-speed automatic. The turbocharged engine is good for

GRENADIER
OFFROAD MODE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC URBANO

281 horsepower, and the powertrain earns exceptional marks for smoothness and refinement. It'll pull the 5901-pound SUV to 60 mph in 7.3 seconds and hit a governed 103-mph top speed. The 1993 North America–spec Defender 110 lumbered to 60 mph in 12.3 seconds on its way to a max of 89 mph. An inline-six Defender 110 (the contemporary one) finds 60 in 6.3 seconds, while the new Toyota Land Cruiser is nearly a half-second behind.

Under the cover embossed with "Grenadier" hides a smooth-revving BMW inline-six.

Straight-line acceleration hardly defines this segment. With stubby overhangs and the departure angle of an F-22 Raptor with its afterburner lit, the Grenadier is clearly designed to excel when the pavement ends. Live axles provide the durable traction off-roaders love, and a ground clearance of over 10 inches gives the go-ahead to clomp down most any two-track. The on-road ride is neither exceptional nor brutal.

A score of 517 on the ramp travel index (RTI) puts the Grenadier well below the new Land Cruiser's 634 but above the Defender 130's 331. Not that front and rear locking differentials would help in the RTI articulation game, but they are available as part of a $2850 Rough pack, which also includes BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO2 tires. Far less aggressive Bridgestones still sing a boisterous tarmac tune, contributing to 73 decibels in the cabin at 70 mph. Both the Land Cruiser and the Defender 130 are better here, with a comparably subdued 68 and 67 decibels.

The driving position faithfully channels an old Defender. You sit upright on comfortable chairs above a narrow pedal box, and a wide console separates driver and passenger. It's a bit of a climb into the cabin, and there are no grab handles on the B-pillars to assist second-row passengers. Build quality, inside and out, gets an A+.

The main instrument display, centrally located above a compass, is part of a 12.3-inch touchscreen that conveys both vehicle speed and infotainment

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER SUCHESKI

The cargo hold's asymmetric French doors limit rearward visibility. The larger door (out of frame) opens second.

doings. Directly in front of the driver is a three-by-11 matrix of red, yellow, green, and blue warning and indicator lights. Typically, warning lights wouldn't get a mention, but most cars don't beep annoyingly every time you break what the car thinks is the posted speed limit. Six keystrokes deactivate the Euro-regulation dingleberry but illuminate a bright-yellow warning icon.

While silencing the speed nanny, you'll also want to deactivate lane-keeping assist because the steering is not great. It's slow (3.9 turns lock-to-lock) and not particularly attuned to going straight. Making matters worse is a near-total lack of self-centering, a byproduct of the suspension geometry's lack of adequate caster angle. So, every time you make a turn, you then have to return the wheel to center.

As a modern take on an old car, the Grenadier has nostalgic charm. There are only two cupholders, and they weren't designed with Stanley or Yeti in mind. The ZF electronic shifter sits juxtaposed between a mechanical hand brake and an actual lever that reaches deep into the Grenadier's bowels to control the two-speed transfer case. The door handles and thumb-press release are like those on a G-wagen and make a sound so special that you'll slam the door a second time just for aural pleasure. And the bevy of switches and knobs on the instrument panel and the overhead console offer straightforward operation. However, the simple luxuries of passive entry and push-button start, which would greatly increase convenience, aren't even options on this $82,385-as-tested SUV.

There are a lot of peculiarities and annoyances here (e.g., 14-mpg observed fuel economy), but we know that most of these shortcomings were intended to give the Grenadier character. Ineos succeeds in delivering an off-road wagon that has the curb appeal of a classic. Cheers to the hope that this single narrow focus gins up sufficient sales so Ineos sticks around long enough to inspire another dream. *—K.C. Colwell*

2023 INEOS GRENADIER FIELDMASTER

Vehicle Type: front-engine, 4-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door wagon **Base/As Tested:** $80,790/$82,385 **Engine:** turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 24-valve inline-6, aluminum block and head, direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 183 in^3, 2998 cm^3 **Power:** 281 hp @ 4750 rpm **Torque:** 331 lb-ft @ 1750 rpm **Transmission:** 8-speed auto ***C/D* Curb Weight:** 5901 lb

TEST RESULTS

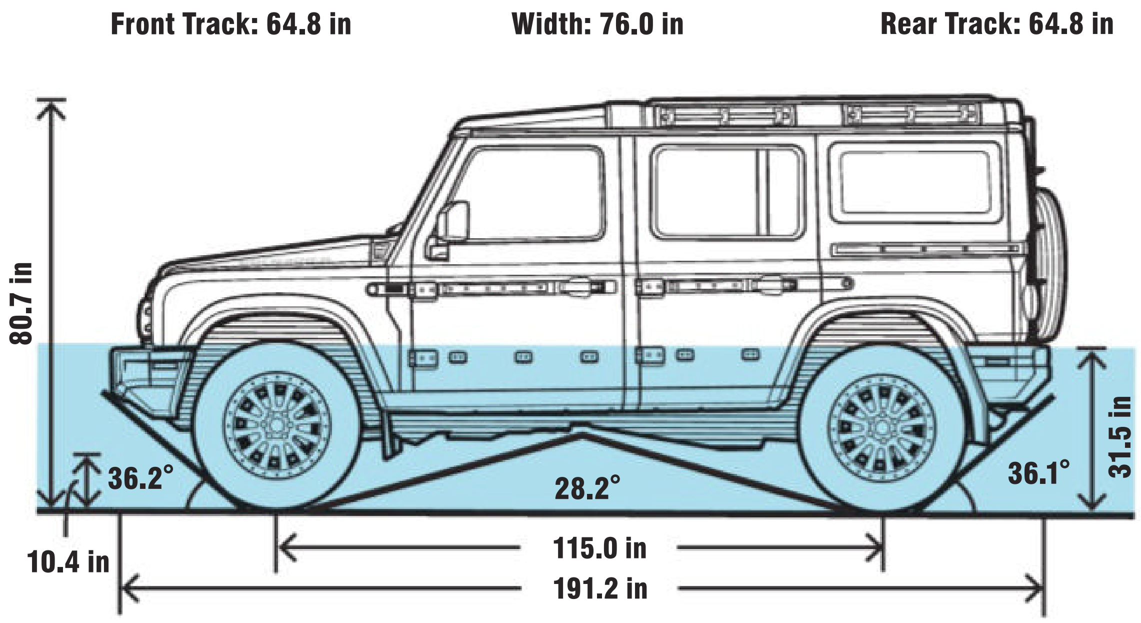
60 mph	7.3 sec
1/4-Mile	15.8 sec @ 86 mph
100 mph	24.4 sec

Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	8.0 sec
Top Speed (gov ltd)	102 mph
Braking, 70–0 mph	194 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	0.62 g

FUEL ECONOMY

***C/D* Observed**	14 mpg
75-mph Hwy Fuel Economy/Range	16 mpg/370 mi
EPA Combined	15 mpg



Small overhangs and a frame wearing no low-hanging fruit give the Grenadier ample off-road dimensions. Low range allows for a 1.3-mph crawl speed.

Duke Boys Face Charges

The **Dodge Charger Daytona** takes the good ol' muscle car and gives it a new-age powertrain, whether we're ready or not.

A throwback Fratzog logo nestles in the front fascia (above). Bo and Luke sit here (below).

HERESY TO SOME, the way forward for others, electric muscle cars are here regardless of whether everyone is ready for them. Case in point: the new Charger Daytona, Dodge's first EV and the two-door spearhead of a new Charger lineup that the brand hopes will help it navigate the sticky tendrils of its storied past.

Later this year, to cover its bases, Dodge will add gas-burning Charger Sixpack models with twin-turbo inline-six power, plus four-door Daytona and Sixpack variants. Not exactly the stuff of legend, but the Daytona's handsome riff on the iconic '68 Charger warrants some optimism. Them Duke boys would revel in the dual-motor, all-wheel-drive Scat Pack's 670 horses and estimated mid-three-second 60-mph time (figure closer to five seconds for the downrated 496-hp R/T trim). They'd also appreciate its 16.1-inch front and rear brakes with Brembo front calipers, plus the fact that all 2024 Scat Pack models (a late introduction) come standard with the optional-for-2025 $3495 Track package. That bundle offers Brembo rear calipers, adaptive dampers, a sport-tuned suspension, an onboard video and data recorder, and high-back sport seats.

But Waylon Jennings would have choice words for the V-8-inspired fake engine noises emitted by the Daytona's 600-watt Fratzonic Chambered Exhaust under the rear bumper

A wide-opening hatchback and a spacious cargo hold let the new Charger haul plenty of 'shine.

(the deep, whirring growl responds to accelerator inputs and also plays through the stereo speakers). And midair narration pauses would be fewer with this car's estimated near-three-ton curb weight, which is due in large part to the fitment of a 400-volt, 93.9-kWh battery that's good for as much as 308 miles of EPA range in the R/T trim but as low as 216 in the Scat Pack. Dodge quotes a 24-minute time to juice the battery from 20 to 80 percent at a DC fast-charger.

At least you get 23 cubic feet of cargo space under the Daytona's sleek rear hatch (37 cubes with the rear seatbacks folded), plus a back seat big enough for adults to cross their legs. Up front, there's a chunky pistol-grip shift lever and the welcome retention of some physical buttons and knobs. The center touchscreen spans 12.3 inches, and the digital gauge cluster measures 10.3 or 16.0 inches, depending on the model. The cabin's bold ambient lighting and textured forms sync with the R/T's $61,590 entry point but are less satisfying at the Scat Pack's $78,680 initial ask. The latter price is inflated by the mandatory-for-2024 $4995 Plus Group, with its extra LED lighting and a 360-degree camera system.

With Stellantis's stout STLA Large platform providing a substantial 121.0-inch wheelbase, the electric Charger is a truly massive car. At more than 17 feet long, there's enough sheetmetal to make even the largest 20-inch wheel-and-tire package—all-season or summer rubber, size 305/35ZR-20 in the front and 325/35ZR-20 in the back—look small. Yet while the Daytona feels hulkingly large on a racetrack, it responds to inputs on twisty back roads with impressive agility, and the ride is surprisingly compliant. The action of its squared-off steering wheel is pleasantly direct, if remote and short on feel.

Toss the Scat Pack sideways in its rear-wheel-drive Drift mode, and the Daytona's limited-slip rear differential and relatively balanced weight distribution make it trickier to gather up than its nose-heavy predecessors. Yet that neutral attitude, combined with a lower center of gravity and decent body control, brings better handling with noticeably less understeer. Other drive settings include Auto, Eco, Wet/Snow, and Sport, plus a nearly silent Stealth mode. Scat Packs also feature Track and Drag settings that have mode-specific battery-conditioning profiles.

None of this will matter to Mopar traditionalists waiting for the upcoming Sixpack trims (or just cursing the heavens in general). Dodge will need new customers drawn to the Daytona's undeniable swagger—and less tethered to history—to determine whether the market wants an electric muscle car. —*Mike Sutton*

2024 DODGE CHARGER DAYTONA

Vehicle Type: front- and rear-motor, all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 2-door hatchback
Base: $61,590 **Motors:** 2 permanent-magnet synchronous AC, 335 hp and 314 lb-ft
Combined Output: 496 or 670 hp, 404 or 627 lb-ft **Transmissions, F/R:** direct-drive
Battery Pack: liquid-cooled lithium-ion, 93.9 kWh **Onboard Charger:** 11.0 kW
Peak DC Fast-Charge Rate: 183 kW **Wheelbase:** 121.0 in **L/W/H:** 206.6/79.8/59.0 in
Curb Weight (*C/D* est): 5800–5900 lb **PERFORMANCE (*C/D* EST)** **60 mph:** 3.5–4.9 sec
100 mph: 9.1–12.0 sec **1/4-Mile:** 11.7–12.8 sec **Top Speed:** 135 mph **EPA Fuel Economy**
Combined: 70–98 MPGe **Range:** 216–308 mi

Drivelines

G to the Power of E

Mercedes-Benz G580 with EQ Technology **HIGHS:** Quicker than the old G550, improved handling, better braking. **LOWS:** Cubist shape torpedoes highway range, cramped inside, dorky name.

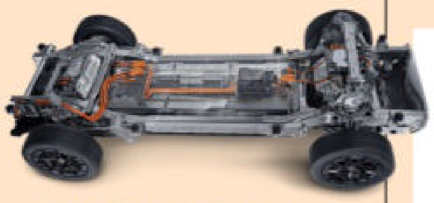
"MERCEDES-BENZ G580 with EQ Technology" is a mouthful, but that's the name. Why not G580 E4? That's more apt, as the G580 has four 145-hp electric motors powering its four wheels. Tally up the numbers, and you get 580 (though the vagaries of rounding and summing four quantities result in an official output of 579 horsepower).

Those four motors are tucked within a ladder frame that houses the 116.0-kWh battery pack. Like the gas-engine G-class SUVs, the G580 has a front suspension that uses control arms and a rear with a solid axle. Unlike the gas-powered Gs, the electric's solid axle is a de Dion type with a Watt's linkage keeping it centered. The G580 can't quite match the acceleration of the AMG G63, and while we've yet to test the new G550 with its turbocharged inline-six, the EV outperforms the former twin-turbocharged V-8–powered G550 in nearly every way.

How does 4.1 seconds to 60 mph instead of 5.3 grab you? What about 12.6 seconds at 108 mph in the quarter-mile versus 13.9 at 100? Surely, you'll like 0.80 g around the skidpad instead of 0.64 g and 162-foot stops from 70 mph rather than 199 feet. Off-road, the 33.5-inch fording depth is some 5.9 inches better than the G550's. The electric G also enjoys better suspension articulation. On the ramp travel index, the electric G scored an impressive 549 points to the G550's 511.

In street driving, the G580 is mostly smooth. It smothers bumps and potholes as if they're not there and does so without a lick of harshness. But a hobbyhorse motion surfaces occasionally, as if the front and rear suspensions aren't quite in sync. This Mercedes is also utterly quiet, except for the odd synthetic sound that at times fools you into believing the vehicle is not electric. It is, and it has an EPA-estimated range of 239 miles, but the G's blocky shape held it to just 160 miles in our 75-mph highway range test. At least the battery charges fairly quickly: We saw a peak rate of 198 kilowatts during a 46-minute recharge from 10 to 90 percent.

While electrification improves the G-wagen's performance and handling and may give it a Twinkie-caliber shelf life, limited range keeps it from being a wholly practical choice. But if you want practical, there are plenty of less charismatic SUVs you can buy. —*Dan Edmunds*



The G580's frame is home to four motors, four transmissions, and a 116.0-kWh lithium-ion battery pack.

2025 MERCEDES-BENZ G580 WITH EQ TECHNOLOGY
Vehicle Type: front- and rear-motor, 4-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door wagon **Base/As Tested:** $162,650/$192,690 **Motors:** 4 permanent-magnet synchronous AC, 145 hp, 215 lb-ft **Combined Output:** 579 hp, 859 lb-ft **Transmissions:** 2-speed automatic **Battery Pack:** liquid-cooled lithium-ion, 116.0 kWh **Onboard Charger:** 9.6 kW **Peak DC Fast-Charge Rate:** 200 kW **Wheelbase:** 113.8 in **L/W/H:** 182.0/74.4/78.2 in ***C/D* Curb Weight:** 6908 lb

TEST RESULTS

60 mph	4.1 sec
100 mph	10.4 sec
1/4-Mile	12.6 sec @ 108 mph

Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.3 sec.

Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	4.4 sec
Top Speed (gov ltd)	112 mph
Braking, 70–0 mph	162 ft
Roadholding, 300-ft Skidpad	0.80 g

***C/D* FUEL ECONOMY AND RANGE**

75-mph Hwy Fuel Economy/Range	47 MPGe/160 mi
Average DC Fast-Charge Rate, 10–90%	128 kW
DC Fast-Charge Time, 10–90%	46 min

EPA FUEL ECONOMY

Combined/Range	62 MPGe/239 mi

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG PAJO

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The Revivalist

The **Nissan Murano** emerges fresh-faced and revitalized from a long-overdue redo.

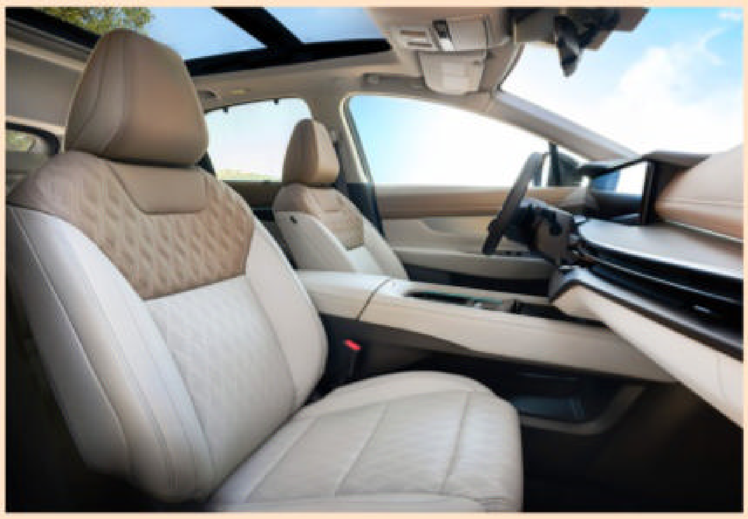
NISSAN'S MID-SIZE SUV was getting old, almost old enough to need an annual tailpipe inspection. Among a crop of competitive fresh faces, the third-generation Murano had gone stale. Now, after Nissan refreshed or redid nearly every other major player in its lineup, the Murano finally gets its day.

The fourth-generation Murano is more of a major refresh than an all-new vehicle. Underneath its shapely new sheetmetal, distinct lighting elements, swooping roofline, and bulging fenders lie structure and chassis components from the outgoing model—and that's fine. The Murano's sleek and clean design conceals those historic elements. Though the wheelbase and overall length stay roughly the same, the new Murano is 2.6 inches wider than its predecessor, and its front and rear tracks have grown by 2.1 inches.

That extra stance pairs exceptionally well with a suspension tuned for less body roll. During our initial drive on Tennessee's buttery-smooth roads, the wheel motions of the big 21-inch alloys felt adequately damped, with no ugliness transmitted into the cabin. Nissan has vastly improved the Murano's steering too. Gone is the hydraulically assisted steering rack. In its place is a more modern electronically assisted setup graced with precision and even some feel.

Under the hood, the variable-compression-ratio and variable-displacement turbo 2.0-liter inline-four—branded VC-Turbo—nestles into the engine bay. Nissan excised the slushy continuously variable automatic transmission in favor of a nine-speed automatic, and we couldn't be happier. No, you won't find the nine-speed very sporting, but dip into the VC-Turbo's 241 horsepower and 260 pound-feet of torque (down 19 ponies but up 20 pound-feet over the former V-6), and the automatic shifts smoothly through its ratios. The gearbox is quick to find the highest gear possible, an inevitable outcome when the end goal is fuel economy. Speaking of which, the EPA estimates 23 mpg combined, the same as the outgoing powertrain.

Inside, the Murano offers a more welcoming environment than before. Nissan said it went to great lengths to create comfortable seats, and the



A wider, more welcoming cabin looks rich enough for Nissan's Infiniti brand.

2025 NISSAN MURANO
Vehicle Type: front-engine, front- or all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door wagon **Base:** $41,860–$42,860 **Engine:** turbocharged and intercooled DOHC 16-valve inline-4, aluminum block and head, port and direct fuel injection **Displacement:** 120–122 in^3, 1971–1997 cm^3 **Power:** 241 hp @ 5600 rpm **Torque:** 260 lb-ft @ 4400 rpm **Transmission:** 9-speed automatic **Wheelbase:** 111.2 in **L/W/H:** 192.9/78.0/67.9 in **Curb Weight (*C/D* est):** 4200–4450 lb **PERFORMANCE (*C/D* EST) 60 mph:** 7.5–7.8 sec **1/4-Mile:** 15.8–16.1 sec **Top Speed:** 120 mph **EPA Fuel Economy Combined:** 23 mpg

heated, ventilated, and massaging chairs in the $50,990 top-spec Platinum proved superb. Other Platinum equipment includes a head-up display, heated rear seats, and those 21-inch wheels. With sail windows and slimmer A-pillars, the Murano provides greater forward visibility than before. In the Platinum model, your fingers find plenty of soft touchpoints, including a leather-wrapped dashboard that's a cut above what you'd get in a Honda Passport or a Chevrolet Blazer. A lower H-point for the front seats increases headroom, and the wider body opens up the cabin—there's a whopping eight cubic feet of additional passenger volume up front. Space is down in the back but still quite comfortable.

Stepping down to the $47,950 SL is a rational move. There's still plenty of standard equipment in the SL, including a 360-degree camera system, a 10-speaker Bose stereo, a panoramic sunroof, a heated steering wheel, and ambient lighting in 64 colors (in case you're into that sort of thing). The base SV kicks off at $41,860 and is the only trim with front-wheel drive, but all-wheel drive can be added for $1000. And for that price, why not? All Muranos feature dual 12.3-inch displays for instrumentation and infotainment, with wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay standard.

They may have been a decade in coming, but the Murano's comprehensive improvements shape it into a much stronger contender in the mid-size-SUV segment. The Murano may not fix all of Nissan's sales woes, but it represents an important step forward. *—David Beard*

The Volkswagen Taos puts some newfound power behind its swing.

LOTS OF SMALL CHANGES can make a big difference, and that's just Volkswagen's strategy with the little Taos's mid-cycle refresh. New lights and wheel designs, a nicer interior with a larger screen, and some hardware tweaks have made this feature-filled small SUV more compelling for 2025.

The diminutive turbo 1.5-liter four-cylinder produces the same 184 pound-feet of torque as before, but horsepower climbs from 158 to 174. Moreover, VW swapped out the all-wheel-drive model's reluctant seven-speed dual-clutch automatic for an eager eight-speed auto already found on the front-drive Taos.

The result is a welcome increase in vim. Throttle response is perhaps too aggressive, often producing a prodigious one-wheel peel in the front-driver with its open differential, but the car no longer feels underpowered. And its engine note beats the soundtrack in competitors such as the Nissan Kicks.

The automatic is a star, vastly improving the all-wheel-drive Taos's manners, especially from a stop. The tires can get loud over coarse pavement, though, and wind noise occasionally annoys.

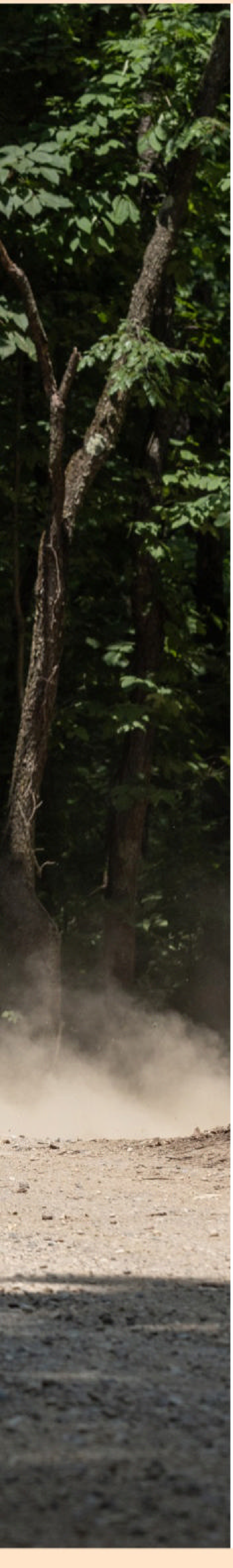
Even with more ponies, the base Taos earns the same EPA ratings as last year, 28 mpg city and 36 mpg highway, while the all-wheel-drive model gains 1 mpg in each for 25 and 33 mpg.

The chassis went untouched, but the Taos exhibits good body control, and the steering, while a bit heavy, builds playfully in response to cornering pressure. It's not explicitly a handler, but the Taos will bend into corners with the verve of a Jetta, if not a GTI. This VW also feels well built in a way that small SUVs often don't.

The big minus is the price premium. The $26,420 starting figure is well over that of a Kicks or a Chevy Trailblazer and about a grand above the Toyota Corolla Cross base price. The tippy-top all-wheel-drive SEL asks $36,120; none of those rivals even crest $31K. But the mid-tier SE is so well equipped that price-conscious buyers can still consider the VW. And they should—the updates make the Taos a solid little runabout. *—Andrew Krok*

“The quad-motor R1T is a little bit of a lot of things: part sports car, part rally truck, part luxury vehicle. One thing it will never be, though, is light.”

—Greg Fink, senior features editor



2022
Rivian R1T

This EV pickup proves to be E-Z to live with. by Austin Irwin

THE SOUND OF A COUPLE ARGUING filled the campground at Michigan's Copper Harbor. Amid the clanging of tent poles and jingling from the collar on their dog, their relationship withered. The tent they'd battled to set up through a downpour didn't have a rain fly. We, on the other hand, felt snug and smug as we watched the show from under the awning of a tent mounted above the bed of the Rivian R1T. This was the truck's last big road trip before the end of its long-term test. The slickness of our camp setup largely mirrored the smoothness of our R1T experience over 40,000 miles.

The trials and tribulations of our long-term tests often reveal problems that shorter encounters cannot. It was certainly true of our last 40,000-mile EV experience, with a 2019 Tesla Model 3, which left us stranded on Christmas with a dead rear inverter. Gas-powered cars have also stumbled: A Cadillac CT5-V Blackwing experienced engine failure, we replaced a leaking oil-pan gasket and the transmission in a Kia Sorento, and a Jeep Gladiator Mojave needed a new rear-axle assembly before 25,000 miles. Rivian might lack the age and experience of longstanding automakers, but outside of a few squeaks and creaks, our R1T had a mostly trouble-free 40,000 miles.

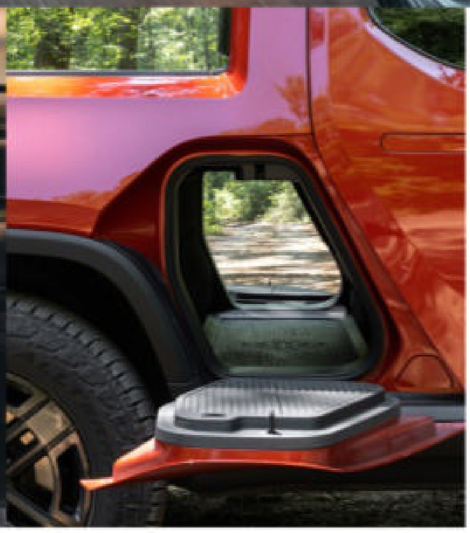
When we did need service, however, the sparse Rivian dealer network meant we had to wait. It took three months before we could get an appointment to free the Bluetooth camp speaker that wouldn't budge from its home at the base of the center console and to silence a phantom "door open" alert for the gear tunnel's right hatch. But none of it cost a dime. Conveniently, the only maintenance requirements over the length of our test were tire rotations and cabin air-filter replacements, with the first significant service—changing the oil in the drive units—not called for until 112,500 miles, well beyond our test period.

At 7054 pounds, this quad-motor, large-battery R1T (our third-heaviest long-term test vehicle ever) presented no small burden for its Pirelli Scorpion All-Terrain Plus Elect 20-inch tires. We spent $2004 replacing them at 20,000 miles. By the end of our test, the second set of rubber was due for replacement, with the worn tires contributing to the additional three decibels of road noise entering the cabin at 70 mph.

The majority of the staff considered the R1T the best-handling pickup they've driven, praising the air springs, independent suspension,

With 835 horsepower from a quartet of electric motors, the R1T can kick up some dust. Then, at the campsite, it can kick back and chill.

ACTION: ANDI HEDRICK; CAMPING: AUSTIN IRWIN



The gear tunnel (left) is one of many features we found very useful. The R1T does normal truck things too, such as tow project cars around town.

and hydraulic anti-roll control. "I stacked glass plates in the rear footwell and expected a lot of clatter, but I didn't hear them bang into each other once," wrote editor-in-chief Tony Quiroga. Later in its life, the truck itself started to loosen up. "It's starting to sound like a rattlesnake," quipped managing testing editor Dave Beard after banging over a dirt road.

The key fob's unresponsive passive-entry function routinely frustrated us. At times it seemed you'd have to slap the truck with its own fob before it would grant entry. This persisted despite several attempted over-the-air cures. Conversely, when using the Rivian phone app as a digital key, executive editor K.C. Colwell reported too much sensitivity, with the truck flashing its lights and chirping as he walked around his house.

During this 10Best-winning truck's 19-month stay with us, Rivian pushed out nearly 20 free over-the-air updates, which included altering the air-spring suspension's behavior, adding a camera view in the gauge cluster when signaling a lane change, and integrating an impressively accurate trailer-weight calculator for range estimates while towing. The biggest game changer, though, came in early 2024, when Rivian became eligible to use Tesla's V3 Superchargers. While this required a piece of hardware in the form of an NACS-to-CCS adapter, it expanded the number of places to recharge the R1T in North America by more than 15,000.

Our most extreme road trip was a 24-hour run from our Michigan office to IMSA's 24-hour endurance race at Daytona International Speedway more than 1000 miles away in Florida. We made seven stops to recharge the battery pack and spent nearly eight and a half hours DC fast-charging at a cost of $317, one way. Fuel for a gas vehicle getting 15 mpg at $4 per gallon would have cost $289.

Our final trip, through Michigan's Upper Peninsula, was a true test of the truck's abilities. With a rooftop tent from Roofnest installed and a portable kitchen from Thunderbolt Adventure Supply mounted in the truck's trick gear tunnel, we lived in the R1T for a week at various campsites. Although we ran string lights, cooked on the 1800-watt induction cooktop, and used the

FROM THE LOGBOOK

"Sometimes the wheel vibrates like I put a nickel in it."

—ANDREW KROK

"A crisp Andrew Jackson just added 200 miles of range. Let's see a TRX do that."

—AUSTIN IRWIN

"The directions from the R1T's native nav are crap!"

—ERIC STAFFORD

"What's that smell? Did someone boil hot dogs in here?"

—CHRISTI VANSYCKLE

"Absolutely love the gear tunnel, a spectacular design I keep finding new uses for."

—DAVE VANDERWERP

"A 130-mile range when pulling my 3000-pound trailer isn't going to cut it for me."

—DAVID BEARD

"A completely touchscreen-controlled system like this really pushes my buttons."

—CARLOS LAGO

"Tires are getting loud. Again."

—DAVE VANDERWERP

"This might be the most useful vehicle out there. Also, has anyone seen my Koegel's Viennas?"

—K.C. COLWELL

TOWING AND INTERIOR: MARC URBANO; DETAIL: ANDI HEDRICK

2022 RIVIAN R1T

Vehicle Type: front- and rear-motor, front/all-wheel-drive, 5-passenger, 4-door pickup **Base/As Tested:** $74,800/$94,800 **Motors:** 4 permanent-magnet synchronous AC **Combined Power:** 835 hp **Combined Torque:** 908 lb-ft **Battery Pack:** liquid-cooled lithium-ion, 128.9 kWh **Onboard Charger:** 11.5 kW **Peak DC Fast-Charge Rate:** 220 kW **Transmissions:** direct-drive **Wheelbase:** 135.8 in **L/W/H:** 217.1/79.3/73.3–78.3 in ***C/D*** **Curb Weight:** 7054 lb **WARRANTY** 5 years/60,000 miles bumper to bumper, 8 years/175,000 miles powertrain, 8 years/unlimited miles corrosion protection, 5 years/60,000 miles roadside assistance. **MODEL-YEAR CHANGES** **2023:** Minor trim changes. **2024:** The Dual-Motor now makes 665 horsepower with the Performance option, a new Drive Cam feature effectively functions as a built-in dash cam, and the 12-volt outlets get the boot. **2025:** A major refresh brings a new electrical architecture, an overhauled suspension, an 850-hp Tri-Motor variant, and more power for the Quad-Motor (1025 horsepower), which now wears staggered summer tires.

TEST RESULTS

	New	40,000 miles
60 mph	3.1 sec	3.2 sec
100 mph	8.4 sec	8.6 sec
1/4-Mile	11.7 sec @ 111 mph	11.8 sec @ 111 mph
Results above omit 1-ft rollout of 0.2 and 0.3 sec, respectively.		
Rolling Start, 5–60 mph	3.3 sec	3.3 sec
Braking, 70–0 mph	179 ft	169 ft
Roadholding		
300-ft Skidpad	0.80 g	0.81 g
Top Speed (gov ltd)	111 mph	111 mph

FUEL ECONOMY

C/D **Observed**	56 MPGe
75-mph Hwy Range	250 mi
Average DC Fast-Charge Rate, 10–90%	115 kW
DC Fast-Charge Time, 10–90%	59 min
EPA Comb/City/Hwy	70/74/66 MPGe

The R1T served as a moving truck for more than one staffer.

climate control, the truck only consumed about 6 percent of its battery per night.

The R1T loves going camping. Being able to cook without the din of a gas generator or the need to handle propane tanks was a treat. The Camp mode and self-leveling function made it easy to set up the truck for camping duty. Whereas other vehicles beep and flash their lights with every touch of the doors, the R1T lets you defeat such obnoxiousness, even allowing you to set a timer for its many power outlets. When airing up the tires after off-roading, the hose for the built-in air compressor—which reaches all four of the truck's corners—automatically fills to the desired air pressure. And being able to store garbage out of sight (and smell) in the frunk is a luxury, indeed.

Off-roading to remote campsites proved to be fun. We navigated tight and technical trails at a defunct copper mine without fault or fear. There's no solid axle or differential pumpkin to catch on a rock. And without locking diffs, you get full steering range even in the most aggressive Rock Crawl mode. We drove it to the top of Mount Arvon, the highest point in Michigan, taking us just over 1979 feet above sea level—or 1980 feet with the truck in its highest suspension setting.

One bit of tech that leaves much to be desired, however, is Rivian's native navigation system. During our camping trip, the truck's map made several errors. It attempted to route us into gated private properties or roads that were so old they were filled with trees, and it was a few blocks off when guiding us to the only ChargePoint DC fast-chargers in Houghton, Michigan. Without Android Auto or Apple CarPlay compatibility, the 15.6-inch infotainment touchscreen becomes a second choice to any smartphone in the car.

After 40,000 miles, our Rivian had consumed a total of 24,071 kilowatt-hours. That's over double what the average American household consumes annually, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The mix of DC fast-charging and AC charging has a large influence on cost, and our $5922 figure results from a formula using an 80/20 split that's biased toward cheaper charging

Like other EVs from startup automakers, the R1T suffers from an overreliance on touchscreens and an annoying aversion to physical switchgear.

INTERIOR: ANDI HEDRICK; PACKED TRUNK: AUSTIN IRWIN

at home (we DC fast-charged for as much as $1.50 per kilowatt-hour and slow-charged overnight at home for as little as $0.13 per kilowatt-hour). If we'd done all our charging at home, the Rivian would've been less expensive per mile to fuel than our long-term 2019 Mazda CX-5 [see "Time Is Money," below]. By contrast, filling up our 2022 Ram 1500 TRX during its stay cost us $16,218.

We get that not everyone will view an electric pickup as a rational purchase, particularly with our R1T's $94,800 sticker price and 835 horsepower. However, there is great value in utility, which this truck has in spades.

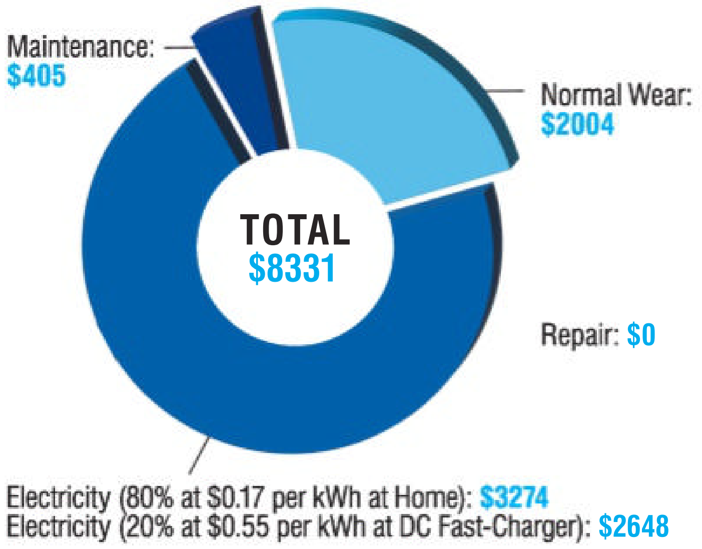
First-time EV ownership will not be without headaches and problems, but they hopefully won't be more serious than a tent without a rain fly. Our takeaway after 40,000 miles with an all-electric pickup from a startup manufacturer is that despite some quirks, it proved a faithful companion.

Maintenance and Repairs

SERVICE

—

Appointments	
• Scheduled	5
• Unscheduled	1
Days out of Service	0
Damage and Destruction	$0



OPERATING COSTS FOR 40,000 MILES

LIFE EXPECTANCIES

—

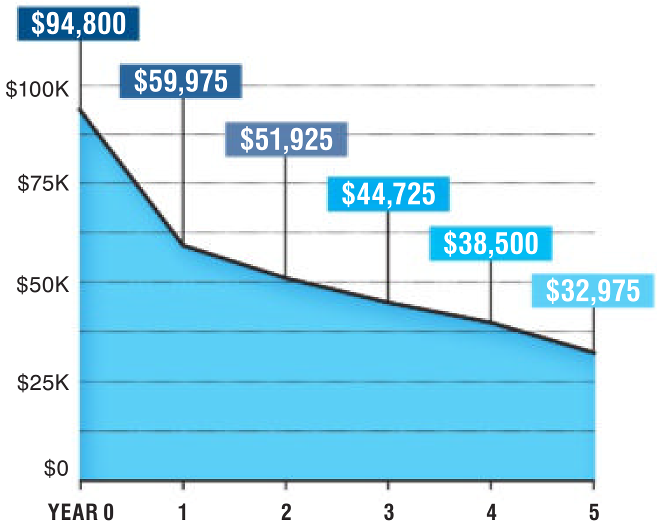
Tires	35,000 miles
Brake Pads	
• Front	85,000 miles
• Rear	75,000 miles

WHAT BITS AND PIECES COST

—

Headlamp	$1798
Wheel	$749
Tire	$501
Wiper Blades (pair)	$60
Front Brake Pads	$259
Cabin Air Filter	$35

Five-year depreciation data from Black Book, based on 15,000 miles per year.



HOW WE'D SPEC IT NOW

The expensive 20-inch wheels and all-terrain tires look cool, but if we could do it again, we'd order the less aggressive all-seasons. We'd also give up some of what makes the R1T such a blast by choosing the 665-hp Dual-Motor Performance version. In our 75-mph highway range test, that model went 30 miles farther than our Quad-Motor, and it loses only three-tenths of a second on its run to 60 mph, with a time of just 3.4 seconds. That's only a tenth slower than a two-pedal Porsche 718 Cayman GT4. In a truck that can still go off-road and tow up to 11,000 pounds, no less.

TIME IS MONEY

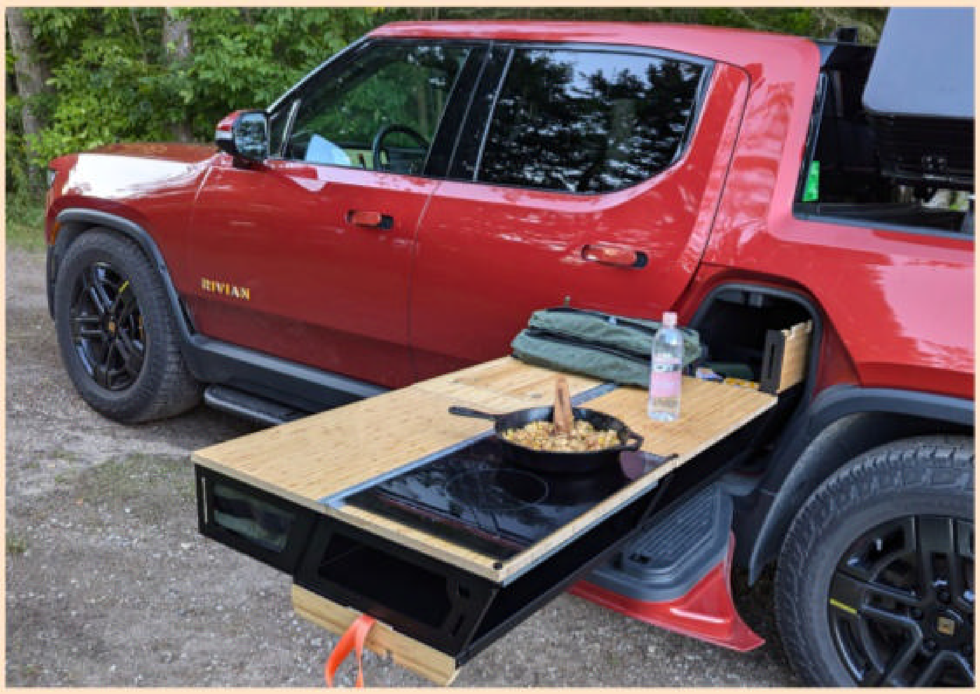
What does it cost to charge the R1T for a year? It's difficult to calculate precisely how much of a driver's kilowatt-hours will come cheap and slow (up to 11.5 kilowatts on a Level 2 connection) or expensive and quick (up to 220 kilowatts at a DC fast-charger), but we can approximate the price of both extremes. Using a DC fast-charger to add 200 miles of range, based on our consumption, costs about $66 ($0.55 per kilowatt-hour) and takes roughly an hour. Going, say, 20,000 miles in a year using only DC fast-charging would cost $6620. By contrast, plugging in at home with a Level 2 source takes at least 10 hours to perform the same recharge but sets you back about $20. Under that scenario, the cost to drive 20,000 miles works out to a far more reasonable $2046, or the same as a gas-powered vehicle averaging 30 mpg and burning regular unleaded.

CHARGING STATION: MARC URBANO

Baubles and Bolt-Ons

ROOFNEST CONDOR OVERLAND 2 XL ($3945) With plenty of room for two (or four if you're using alcohol as a lubricant), the Roofnest Condor Overland 2 XL is the most comfy way to sleep in nature we've experienced this side of a four-by-four RV. The tent features LED lighting inside and out, but our favorite part was stargazing through its clear vinyl skylight. The 2.0-inch-thick memory-foam mattress was okay for some sleepers, but we suggest a bit more cushion if you're pushing 200 pounds or more. We mounted our tent to Rivian's locking cargo crossbars with billet aluminum mounts from Wheel Every Weekend and never needed to retighten the hardware.

THUNDERBOLT ADVENTURE SUPPLY OVERLAND KITCHEN ($4225) It took us all of 15 minutes and four bolts to install this finely built kitchen into the Rivian's gear tunnel. Next thing you know, we were cracking eggs and cooking chorizo breakfast burritos. This portable kitchen relies on an 1800-watt induction cooktop, which heats quickly. The countertop and the removable cutting board are made from bamboo, and there's a silicone washtub for cleaning dishes. Boiling water on this stove is much easier than using the usual campground methods of an open flame or gas bottles. This is like having a real outdoor kitchen.



You might be able to pay for the slide-out kitchen by selling grilled cheeses at three Widespread Panic concerts. One for $3, two for $5.

MEGAWATT PERFORMANCE ROCK SLIDERS ($2450) Designed to protect the R1T's body, Electruck4x4.com's Megawatt rock sliders are easily installed below the rocker panels. Despite weighing 66 pounds each, they were simple enough to mount to our truck, as they require only the removal of three plastic panels (per side) and bolt directly to the Rivian's existing hardware.

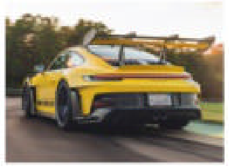
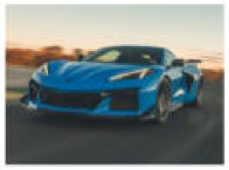
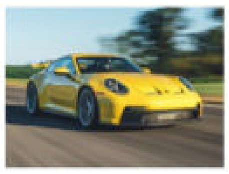
SOONISH CLICK & CHARGE PREMIUM WIRELESS PHONE CHARGER ($169) The R1T's standard inductive charging pad is fussy enough that we looked for an alternative. A cutout intended for storing small items ended up trapping them, and the pad required precise phone positioning to begin wireless charging. S00nish's aftermarket charger fits in the same space as Rivian's and provides a larger cubby for keys and coins. Its design features an engraved topographical map of Washington's Mount Rainier. However, we still experienced issues getting a charge, so results may vary depending on the phone and the thickness of its case.

CAMP, COOKING, AND SLIDERS: AUSTIN IRWIN; PHONE CHARGER: MARC URBANO

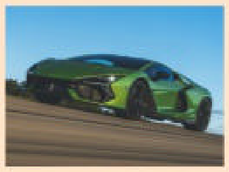
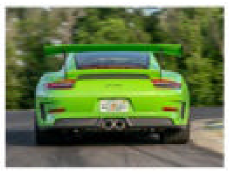
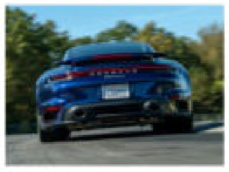
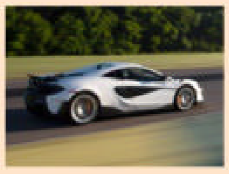
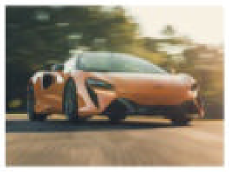
4.1 MILES 24 TURNS

Passing Judgments

THE 2019 McLAREN SENNA remains the king of production cars around Virginia International Raceway's 4.1-mile Grand Course. Joining it at the top of our Lightning Lap leaderboard are the cars below, minus some notable entries that we haven't fully tested: the 2021 Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series (2:37.0), the 2021 McLaren 765LT (2:38.4), the 2022 Porsche 911 GT3 with Manthey Racing upgrades (2:39.8), the 2024 Lucid Air Sapphire from the current Lightning Lap (2:40.2), and the 2023 Lamborghini Huracán Tecnica (2:43.9). This list represents the best of the best since we started our annual trip to VIR in 2006.

LIGHTNING LAP RANK, MODEL (MODEL YEAR TESTED)	VIR GRAND COURSE TIME, M:SS.S	PRICE AS TESTED, $	60 MPH/ 1/4-MILE, SEC	TOP SPEED, MPH	BRAKING, 70–0 MPH, FT	ROAD-HOLDING, G
	2:34.9	$982,816	2.7/10.0	208*	136	1.12
 ③ **PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS (2023)** **HIGHS:** Feral looks, 9000-rpm goose bumps, big-time grip fed by significant downforce at triple-digit speeds, weighs only 3216 pounds, not as brutal on the street as expected. **LOWS:** Big price bump over the standard 911 GT3, racing seats don't fit everyone, getting lost in all the chassis settings. **VERDICT:** Answers all questions with "Because race car."	2:37.2	$284,320	2.7/10.9	184*	133	1.16
 ④ **PORSCHE 911 GT2 RS WEISSACH (2018)** **HIGHS:** Berserk straight-line speed, huge grip around corners, ultraprecise steering combined with fluid handling make it a hoot at any speed. **LOWS:** Uncomfortable fixed-back carbon-fiber seats, noisy highway ride, a bit much for daily use. **VERDICT:** A set of race tires away from the starting grid at the Daytona 24. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	2:37.8	$348,730	2.5/10.2	211*	129	1.17
 ⑥ **CHEVROLET CORVETTE Z06 Z07 (2023)** **HIGHS:** Sounds like the Monaco Grand Prix is happening behind your head, track-ready handling and steering, still comfortable to drive on the street, exotic-car curb presence. **LOWS:** Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2R tires struggle in the wet, styling is more striking than pretty, can swill premium like a big-block V-8, somehow induces nostalgia for the present. **VERDICT:** Best. Corvette. Ever. **AWARDS:** 10Best.	2:38.6	$160,505	2.6/10.5	189*	144	1.13
 ⑦ **CHEVROLET CORVETTE ZR1 8AT (2019)** **HIGHS:** A supercharged small-block V-8 making 755 horsepower, meaningful uptick in downforce, the apogee of the front-engine Corvette. **LOWS:** Stiff ride, marginal performance gains over the Z06 at the test track, rear wing complicates loading cargo, the interior smells like plastic resin. **VERDICT:** The last and perhaps greatest front-engine Corvette.	2:39.5	$141,190	2.9/10.7	212*	134	1.18
 ⑧ **McLAREN 720S COUPE (2018)** **HIGHS:** The ride of a Mercedes S-class with the handling of a McLaren, gobsmacking acceleration from the 710-hp twin-turbo 4.0-liter V-8, cool-looking cabin, expansive views out. **LOWS:** Stiff brake pedal requires acclimation, flat steering effort despite excellent feel, not as lively as a Porsche 911 GT3 at lower speeds. **VERDICT:** McLaren continues to rewrite the supercar bylaws.	2:39.7	$378,215	2.6/10.1	212*	149	1.10
 ⑪ **PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS (2022)** **HIGHS:** Mid-mounted 911 GT3 engine with 493 horsepower, svelte curb weight, massive amounts of grip, relentless stopping power, exquisite steering, howling 9000-rpm flat-six siren song. **LOWS:** Rides rather rough for daily use, automatic only, consider earplugs, costs near-GT3 money. **VERDICT:** The Cayman finally stands up to its big brother, the 911.	2:40.5	$198,297	2.8/11.0	196*	132	1.11
 ⑫ **PORSCHE 911 GT3 PDK (2022)** **HIGHS:** Sings a 101-decibel Grammy-worthy wail at full throttle, hyperreactive steering, ferocious grip and stopping power, excellent outward visibility, quicker than the manual version. **LOWS:** Firm ride can be taxing around town, lots of missing features for the price, underwhelming standard interior. **VERDICT:** A brilliant formula, honed to near perfection. **AWARDS:** Comparison-test win.	2:40.6	$211,405	2.8/10.9	197*	133	1.17

*MFR CLAIM †*C/D* ESTIMATE ‡LAP TIME FOR AN ARTURA SPIDER, TEST RESULTS FOR AN ARTURA COUPE

	LIGHTNING LAP RANK, MODEL (MODEL YEAR TESTED)	VIR GRAND COURSE TIME, M:SS.S	PRICE AS TESTED, $	60 MPH/ 1/4-MILE, SEC	TOP SPEED, MPH	BRAKING, 70–0 MPH, FT	ROAD-HOLDING, G
	⑬ **PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS MR (2023)** **HIGHS:** A clinic on steering response and feel, 9000 rpm of sonic glory, bolt-ons and manually adjustable dampers add 176 pounds of downforce at 124 mph, looks meaner than the standard GT4 RS. **LOWS:** A mirror full of wing, upgrades are only useful on a racetrack, quiet only when it's off, Manthey's base kit costs over $50K before extras and installation. **VERDICT:** The silliest Cayman ever.	2:40.9	$265,600†	2.8/11.0	196*	136	1.16
	⑭ **LAMBORGHINI REVUELTO (2024)** **HIGHS:** Lambo's naturally aspirated V-12 lives on and now redlines at 9400 rpm, a combined 1001 horses routed through an electrified all-wheel-drive system, smooth shifts from a new dual-clutch gearbox, impressively agile yet stable at speed, EV mode for when you want to be seen but not heard. **LOWS:** Seriously porky at 4290 pounds, minuscule EV range. **VERDICT:** Hybrid technology on a rampage.	2:41.3	$729,458	2.2/9.7	217†	154	1.10
	⑮ **2019 PORSCHE 911 GT3 RS (2019)** **HIGHS:** A spectacular engine in a car made almost entirely of special elements, arguably the best electrically assisted power steering in the business, clairvoyant transmission, monstrous grip levels, retains just enough civility to be livable around town. **LOWS:** Terrifyingly expensive, seriously loud when driven as intended, near-race cars don't do subtle. **VERDICT:** A pet monster.	2:41.6	$208,717	2.8/10.9	194*	128	1.24
	⑯ **PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO GT (2025)** **HIGHS:** The quickest car to 60 mph we've ever tested, awesome grip and improved handling balance with the optional Pirelli P Zero Trofeo RS Elect tires, trick active dampers eat up bumps. **LOWS:** Still weighs two and a half tons, less than 300 miles of EPA-rated range, it costs how much?! **VERDICT:** Porsche's track-focused formula works on EVs too.	2:41.8	$253,940	1.9/9.3	180	141	1.08
	⑰ **PORSCHE 911 TURBO S (2021)** **HIGHS:** Reminds you what fast feels like, launch-control acceleration, impressive track performance on relatively ordinary Pirelli P Zero PZ4 summer tires, an optional Lightweight package makes it even quicker. **LOWS:** Optional sport suspension rides firmly enough to buck you out of the seat, as expensive as it is quick. **VERDICT:** A serious contender for the title of ultimate performance car.	2:42.5	$216,050	2.2/10.1	205*	139	1.10
	⑱ **McLAREN 600LT SPIDER (2019)** **HIGHS:** Aerodynamic add-ons bring meaningful downforce, a minimalist 3132-pound curb weight, wringing out the twin-turbo flat-crank V-8 to 8500 rpm, telegraphic steering feedback, tireless brakes. **LOWS:** Optional carbon-fiber seats are unforgiving, lacks the ride-quality bandwidth of McLaren's more expensive models. **VERDICT:** A taste of the big-dog Senna's intensity for roughly a third of the price.	2:42.6	$332,120	2.8/10.7	201*	145	1.11
	⑲ **FORD GT (2017)** **HIGHS:** Closest thing to a roadgoing Le Mans winner, the rear view of the flying buttresses and pontoon fenders never gets old, makes rivals seem tame, genuinely cool Multimatic chassis tech. **LOWS:** The twin-turbo V-6 is loud in a crude way; limited headroom for helmets; the rear view is only of the buttresses, fenders, and wing. **VERDICT:** A staggering achievement and a future classic, despite the V-6.	2:43.0	$525,750	2.9/10.7	216*	145	1.11
	⑳ **PORSCHE 918 SPYDER (2015)** **HIGHS:** Equally breathtaking in price, performance, and complexity; a Le Mans–worthy V-8 that screams to 9000 rpm through top-mounted exhaust trumpets; shockingly well mannered at ludicrous speeds; the roof comes off. **LOWS:** Asking prices have climbed into the millions, the march of performance waits for no one. **VERDICT:** A decade on, Porsche's hyper–plug-in hybrid remains one for the ages.	2:43.1	$875,175	2.1/9.7	214*	142	1.10
	㉑ **MERCEDES-AMG GT R (2018)** **HIGHS:** Race-car-inspired nine-stage traction control, otherworldly twin-turbo 4.0-liter V-8, seductively athletic design, immensely capable on the racetrack. **LOWS:** The 577 horses seem adequate until you consider the Black Series version has 720, flinty ride and a cramped cabin make it less everyday friendly than a Porsche 911. **VERDICT:** Hey, Siri. How do you say "Dodge Viper" in German?	2:43.4	$195,945	3.2/11.1	198*	133	1.14
	㉓ **LAMBORGHINI HURACÁN PERFORMANTE (2018)** **HIGHS:** Tingles from the naturally aspirated 5.2-liter V-10 revving to 8500 rpm, blisteringly quick launch-control starts, so planted it makes 1.11 lateral g's feel anticlimactic, fighter-jet-inspired cockpit. **LOWS:** It's loud inside, we averaged 10 mpg, the carbon-fiber racing seats make for a tight fit. **VERDICT:** A drivable special occasion that feels capable of warping space-time.	2:44.0	$317,285	2.2/10.1	202*	135	1.11
	㉔ **McLAREN ARTURA SPIDER‡ (2023)** **HIGHS:** Accelerates like a solid rocket booster thanks to a hybridized twin-turbo 3.0-liter V-6, fairly light for a hybrid at 3443 pounds, all-day comfortable, beautiful exterior design, modest EV range for stealthy getaways. **LOWS:** A V-6 simply can't replicate the tingly feel of a flat-plane-crank V-8; could be more playful at the limit; and, you know, the price. **VERDICT:** McLaren updates to the 2.0 version.	2:44.0	$284,925	2.6/10.3	205*	141	1.08
	㉕ **DODGE VIPER ACR (2017)** **HIGHS:** Serious downforce for a street-legal car, tire-shredding torque from 8.4 liters, highly adjustable rear wing and dampers, action-hero looks invite attention. **LOWS:** High-effort controls quickly get old in traffic, intrusive center console, V-10 cooks the cabin, more fun on the track than on the road, Dodge stopped making them. **VERDICT:** If a car could suplex you, this one would. Actually, it probably can.	2:44.2	$154,885	3.2/11.4	177*	134	1.15

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1985–89
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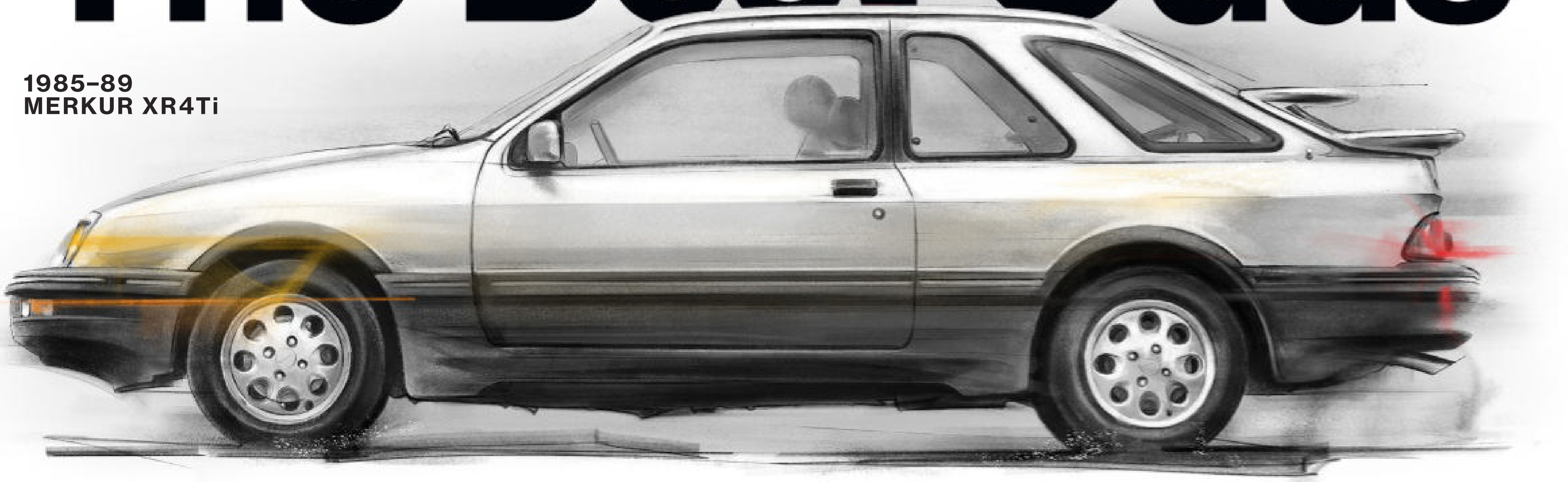

The cars I recall most fondly were neither the prettiest nor the quickest. Certainly not the most expensive. They were machines that emerged willfully peculiar and intractably idiosyncratic. by John Phillips

TO OUR CHAOTIC SHORES the Big Three have randomly imported Euro-spec cars. Apart from tear gas, little has more reliably induced regret and schadenfreude. Examples abound: (1) an Opel Astra sold here as a Saturn Astra, (2) an Opel Omega as a Cadillac Catera, (3) a Teutonic Ford Sierra as a 1985 Merkur XR4Ti.

Importing the Ford required more balls than are weekly bounced by the Harlem Globetrotters. For starters, no one could pronounce Merkur, including salespeople at about 700 “select” Lincoln-Mercury dealers, many of whom selected to be deselected. Asserted Dearborn: “Merkur is a Greek god; it’s ‘Mercury’ in German; it’s a planet; it’s the element known as quicksilver.” I’m not sure that sales folks right then really needed quicksilver.

As marketing disorders go, it was half *Snakes on a Plane*, half Chappaquiddick, half mattress fire. The federalization alone ate $50 million on top of the $1.2 billion–plus that Ford spewed to shift Merkurs from Deutschland to Detroit. Along that path, this coupe gained a few hundred pounds via 850 unique North American parts, none buffing performance. In 1989, fewer than 3000 XR4Tis were sold, versus maybe 120,000 Lincoln Town Cars, each netting a Dagwood-delicious sales commission. Town Cars went on display inside, Merkurs outside.

It broke my gin-fumed heart. The car was so delectable that I bought an onyx XR4Ti in Huntington Beach, California. Fully loaded—and I may have been too—it set me back $18,900. It held its own against the BMW 325, the Audi 4000 CS Quattro, and the Saab 9000. Similar handling, a gratifying shifter, a trace of lift-throttle oversteer, and au courant Euro upholstery. Too much body roll, okay, but that made it as comfy as the Saab during freeway slogs. In America, the XR4Ti felt almost exotic. Neighbors asked, “Where’d you find that thing?”

The Merkur’s turbocharged SOHC 2.3-liter inline-four promoted 175 horsepower to the rear wheels. It was a tad thrashy at steep revs and as peaky as every other ’80s-era turbo. Boost flattened your cheeks at 3000 rpm and faded to emphysema moments later. Never a fan, Jack Roush opined, “It wants a smaller turbo and higher compression.”

Out of the XR4Ti’s rear deck grew a biplane wing that could dice rutabagas. Half the lower body hid beneath gray plastic cladding. The Euro headlamps tormented oncoming drivers. The shape was an aero ovoid that resembled a geothermal event bulging up through the tarmac.

Among the faithful was Edsel Ford, who persuaded Roush to abandon his rip-roaring Mercury Capris in favor of XR4Tis in SCCA Trans-Am racing.

“Two hundred horsepower a cylinder!” is what Roush briefly summoned while experimenting at his 18 dynos in Livonia, Michigan. “This rascal would hit so hard that it had trouble keeping the flywheel attached.” Some other pricey parts too.

Mercury rising? Only if we mean underhood temps, which eventually immolated my own turbo’s bearings. Meanwhile, in 1987, Roush secured Merkur’s lone Trans-Am title. The sales needle, however, had already rusted in place.

Roush and an outfit called Rapido sold credible aftermarket parts that bumped the street car’s output to around 200 horsepower, enabling mid-six-second dashes to 60 mph. For $4500, Roush’s Exposure XR4Ti kept its cool via an electric fan, two dozen hood vents, and a two-inch-thicker radiator. For a spell, the Exposure starred as Jackie Stewart’s and Bob Bondurant’s favorite ride. They owned possibly the only two examples.

If Dearborn’s marketing orchestration was 12-note discordant, it went ballistically atonal when the XR4Ti was joined in showrooms by the 1988 Merkur Scorpio sedan. It too was desirable. It too plunged into the commode with force sufficient to crack porcelain. Ford couldn’t help but pull the plug—a plug it had never inserted into any known power outlet.

Harvard Business School may yet savor this branding blunder as a teachable moment. The whole misadventure recollected British writer Walter de la Mare. As he lay on his deathbed, his daughter asked what she could get for him. Old Walt croaked, “Too late for fruit, too soon for flowers.”

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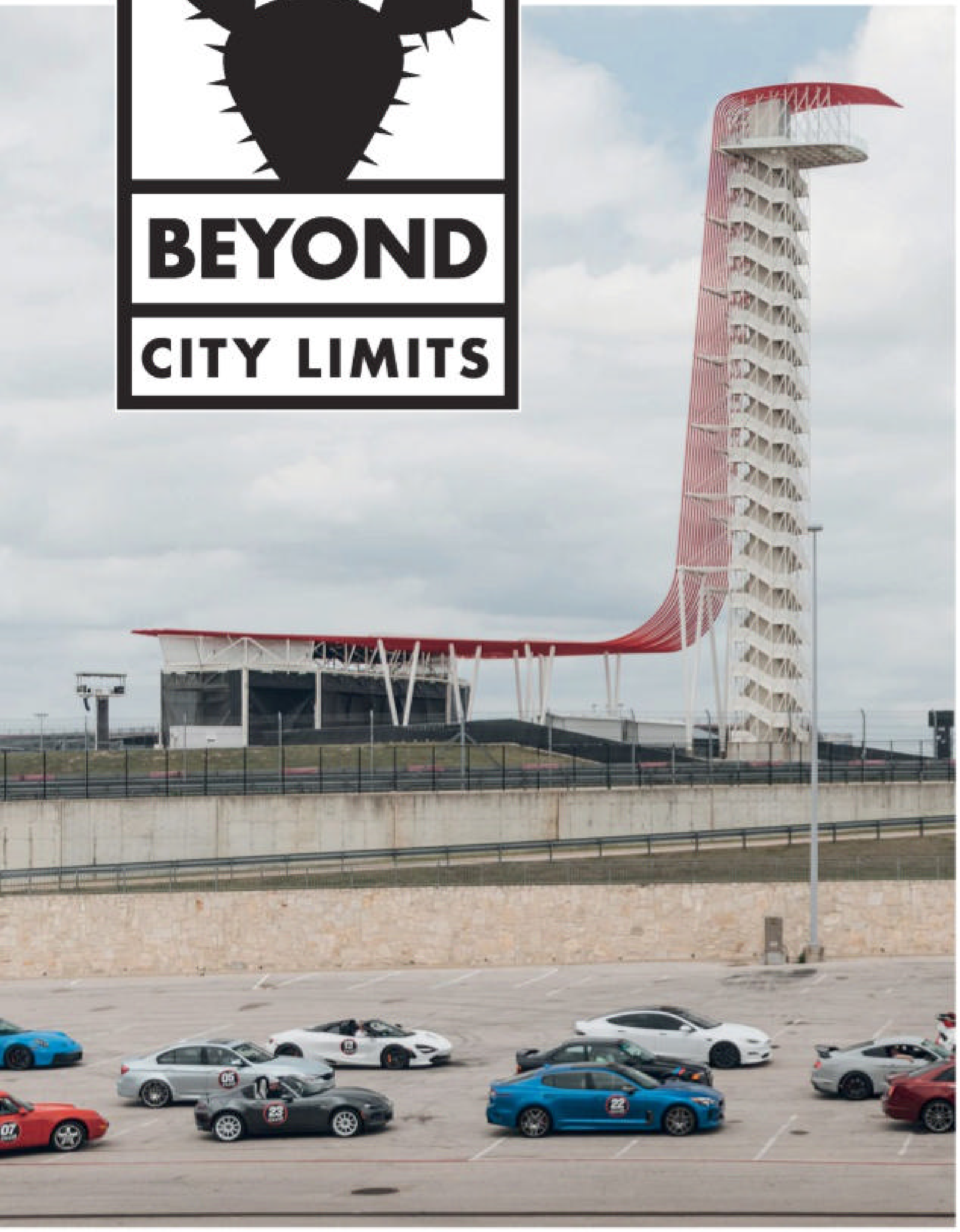

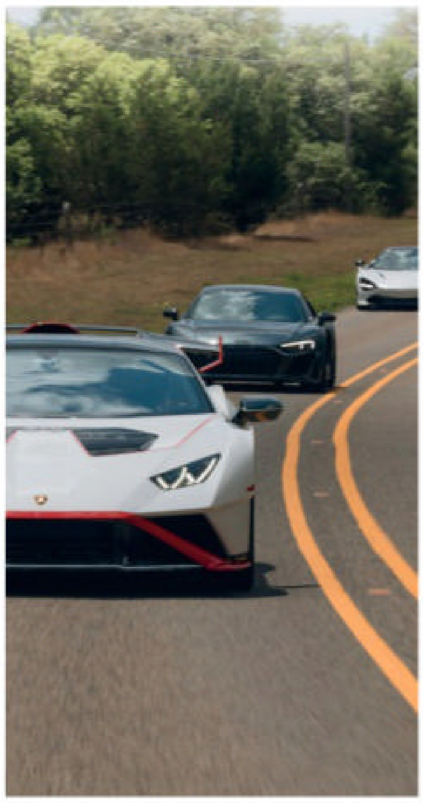

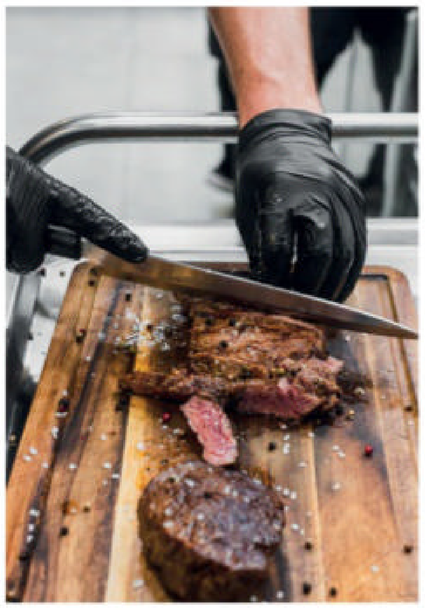

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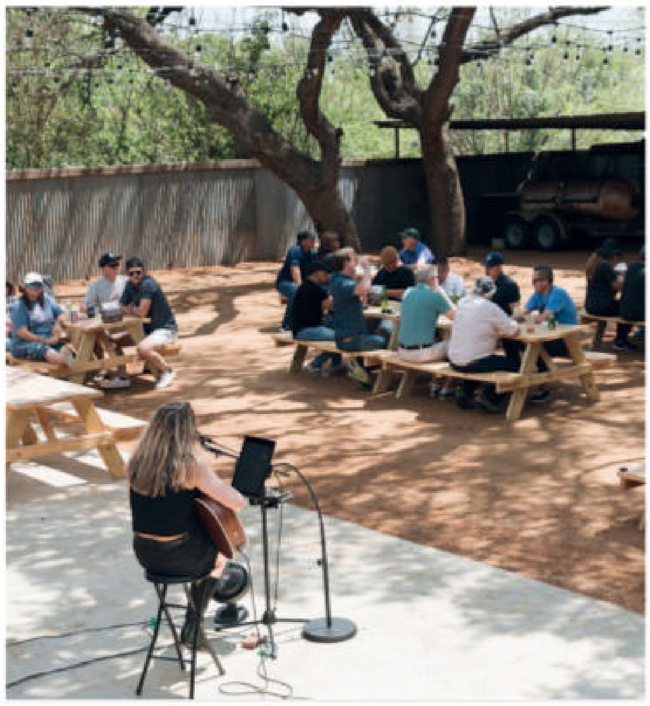

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